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A Phenomenological inquiry of international service-learning experiences and their impacts
on post-service educational experiences

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Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of
Doctor of Philosophy in International Educational Leadership

University of Montana

Spring 2017

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INTERNATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING EXPERIENCES

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International Educational Leadership

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Abstract

Institutions of higher education are increasingly faced with global forces. Consequently, colleges and universities must internationalize in order to stay relevant when faced with global forces. One means by which post-secondary institutions are internationalizing is by offering students international service-learning experiences. During these experiences, students acquire intercultural competencies and a more in-depth understanding of the educational content delivered throughout their educational career. This qualitative phenomenological study explored the acquisition of intercultural competencies by twelve participants attending the University of Montana and Montana State University. Participants were interviewed, utilizing questions about the understanding of intercultural competencies, the acquisition of said competencies, institutional preparation for and follow-up of international service-learning experiences, and the impact of international service-learning experiences on subsequent coursework. The results of this study show that participants' home institutions offered very little preparatory and follow-up intervention. Despite the lack of institutional intervention, participants acquired six intercultural competencies associated with this study and utilized self-guided reflection exercises to make sense of their shared experience after having returned to their home institution, which resulted in a more robust post-experience education. Additionally, participants re-evaluated professional and academic ambitions based on their exposure to social inequities and drastically different gender norms from those of their native cultures. The results of this study have implications for colleges and universities wishing to facilitate international service-learning opportunities for undergraduate students. Despite a lack of institutional interventions, participants were greatly impacted by their international service-learning experience, suggesting that the impacts might be more profound with additional institutional intervention.

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Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the shared experience of twelve students studying at the University of Montana and Montana State University. Participants experienced international service-learning facilitated by their home institution. This study is comprised of five chapters. The first chapter introduces the study by outlining the problem statement, purpose of the study, and central question, limitations and delimitations, and significance of this study. Chapter two consists of a detailed literature review from which the components of chapter one derive. Chapter three outlines the study methodology, including a description of a gap in the literature that this study hopes to fill. Chapter four describes the analysis of data and will be followed by chapter five outlining findings, recommendations, and conclusions. In simple terms, this study researched the shared experience of twelve participants who all experienced international service-learning that was facilitated by their home institution.

Problem Statement

Increasingly, institutions of higher education are working to internationalize the student experience due to the effects of globalism. Whereas at the beginning of the 21st century, international orientation, characteristics, and programmatic offerings of a college or university may have been perceived as merely an interesting and appealing component of an institution's profile, today internationalization is a core issue of concern to the higher education enterprise, touching directly on questions of social and curriculum relevance, instructional quality and prestige, national competitiveness and innovation potential. More recently, for better or worse, institutions also view internationalization as a source of potential revenue. (Deardorff, Heyl, deWit & Adams, 2012, p.3)

Regardless of motivation, a common characteristic of higher education is the internationalization of curriculum and the student experience overall, including study and service abroad experiences.

Globalization also intensified the conflict between different levels of identity – global, regional, local, and individual – which brought additional complexity to, among other issues, the implementation of internationalization in higher education institutions. Moreover, comprehensive internationalization is becoming the standard for the necessary reaction of higher education institutions to globalization. The American Council on Education has promoted the concept of ‘comprehensive internationalization’ throughout academia for several years as being “a strategic, coordinated process that aligns and integrates international policies, programs, and initiatives and that positions colleges and universities to be more globally oriented and internationally connected” (Peterson & Helms, 2013, p.29).

The internationalization of higher education demands that educators provide globalizing experiences for students, which serve as tools for contextualizing an increasingly interconnected world. Recently, authors, internationalization professionals, and faculty have made efforts to close the global learning circle by redirecting global learning goals and outcomes toward the student’s place of belonging. As noted by Peacock (2007), “Once we achieve global identities, we must ground them, integrating the global and the local in some way that energizes and sustains both” (p. 10). Peacock’s concept of Grounded Globalism assumes that humans contextualize their lives, in part, through a sense of place and belonging. The progressive globalization of society necessarily and continuously encroaches upon our sense of place and belonging. Moreover, the same courses of identity promoting a sense of place and belonging often constitute barriers to expanding and reintegrating global learning.

If Peacock's concept of Grounded Globalism is accepted, student learning outcomes must be considered in much the same manner. "Numerous reports of service-learning programs evaluate personal, social, and citizenship outcomes for students, but relatively few document academic or intellectual learning outcomes" (Rubin & Matthews, 2013, p. 68). As a result, college and university administrators must use other means by which to assess the student outcomes in international service experiences. In some cases, administrators choose to rely on student assessments (Rubin & Matthews, 2013, p. 68). But, student assessments do not assess outcomes. Rather, they assess student satisfaction. There is a "state of confounded rationales, program goals, and program types [that] complicates assessing study abroad outcomes to the point that there is limited high-quality evidence on its outcomes" (Bringle & Hatcher, 2013, p. 9).

Outcomes assessment is crucially important if study abroad and international experiences are to find a firm foothold in the curriculum and if curricular designers are to make wise decisions that earn the support of the executive leadership of the campus. Researchers need to determine how [international service learning] contributes to a student's readiness and preparedness to learn after returning to the home campus (Tonkin, 2011, p. 208).

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to assess the academic outcomes of international service opportunities and if/how the same international service-learning experience is used to contextualize the learning process of earning a four-year degree. Manen's (1990) book on hermeneutical phenomenology describes the researcher choosing an "abiding concern" in which to interpret. For the purposes of this study, the researcher's abiding concern was international service. "A phenomenology provides a deep understanding of a

phenomenon as experienced by several individuals” (Creswell, 2007, p. 62). The focus of this study was to better understand the essence of the shared experience of international service-learning. This study explored the many cultural competencies gained in international service experiences and how students use them, either purposefully or not, to inform their educational process.

Additionally, students wishing to participate in international service opportunities may find the results of this study useful in preparation for the international service-learning experience and during the reflection process. When choosing international service opportunities, this study may be of use to students wishing to achieve specific outcomes based on a chosen major or profession.

Central Question

The aforementioned problem required exploring the lived experiences of students who have participated in international service-learning. “Qualitative research questions are open-ended, evolving, and non-directional” (Creswell, 2013, p. 138). The central question for a phenomenology should be broad and have a component of “meaning” (Creswell, 2013).

In order to explore the phenomenon fundamental to this study, the central question for this study was:

How does an international service-learning experience, facilitated by a four-year educational institution, ultimately inform the educational process for student participants?

Definition of Terms

In an effort to better allow the reader to understand the concepts and themes in this study, a list of terms foreign to common parlance, but frequently used in this study are listed and defined. The following includes “definition of terms that readers will need in order to understand

a research project [and] terms that individuals outside the field of study may not understand and that go beyond common language” (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2007, p. 17).

External outcomes. “The summation of attitudes, knowledge, and skills, as well as the internal outcomes, is demonstrated through the behavior and communication of the individual” (Deardorff & Jones, 2012, p. 287).

Globalism. “The broad economic, technological and scientific trends that directly affect higher education and are largely inevitable in the contemporary world” (Altbach, 2006, p. 123).

Grounded globalism. A concept that assumes that humans contextualize their lives, in part, through a sense of place and belonging (Peacock, 2007).

Intercultural competence. “Effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations” (Deardorff, 2006, p. 249).

Internal outcomes. “The attitudes, knowledge, and skills... [that] lead to an internal outcome that consists of flexibility, adaptability, an ethnorelative perspective and empathy” (Deardorff and Jones, 2012, p. 287). The ability to “see from others’ perspectives and to respond to others according to the way in which the other person desires to be treated, thus demonstrating empathy” (Deardorff and Jones, 2012, p. 287).

Internationalization. “The process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight, 2004, p. 11).

International service-learning. “A structured academic experience in another country in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that addresses identified community needs; (b) learn from direct interaction and cross-cultural dialogue with others; and (c) reflect on the experience in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a

deeper appreciation of the host country and the discipline, and an enhanced sense of their own responsibilities as citizens, locally and globally” (Bringle , Hatcher, & Jones, 2011, p. 19).

Outcomes. “The end results of internationalization activities and are typically formulated at a higher level of abstraction than outputs, which include, for instance, quality enhancement of education or reputation enhancement” (Deardorff & van Gaalen, 2012, p. 168).

Study-abroad. “Credit-bearing undergraduate study in another country incorporated into degree studies at the home university” (Brewer & Leask, 2012, p. 254).

Delimitations

Delimitations “define the parameters of the research study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 113). In other words, the delimitations establish the boundaries in which the researcher must remain. This study was delimited to traditional students enrolled at one of Montana’s two flagship institutions (University of Montana and Montana State University) who have experienced an international service-learning project facilitated by university officials.

Limitations

An inherent limitation to qualitative research is the reliance on the memory of participants. Some of the questions used in interviews may require participants to recall events or feelings from the past. Participant recollection may have changed with the passing of time. Additionally, the researcher’s presence during data gathering interviews may impact the participants’ responses (Creswell, 2013). Another limitation to this study is the time spent by participants in a learning environment after the international service experience. By virtue of having occupied a space in the marketplace of ideas, participants may falsely attribute academic gains to a profound experience (travel abroad) rather than learned behaviors and skills gained while in an educational setting.

Significance of Study

As internationalization of higher education continues to become more prevalent, researchers are beginning to examine the outcomes of such experiences on the educational process. Many studies have been conducted on the results of study abroad experiences, but few have been conducted on the impacts of service abroad experiences on the post-secondary educational process. Research on this subject is increasing, but many questions remain unanswered by researchers (Bringle, Hatcher, & Jones, 2011).

Leaders in higher education must be prepared to track and understand the broadest global trends in higher education, as well as the internalization of higher education more specifically, while at the same time attending effectively to the unique needs and aspirations of their particular institutions, local communities, and regional or national contexts (p. 3).

The significance of this study is filling a gap in the literature regarding internationalization and educational outcomes. Additionally, educational leaders will have a better understanding of the impact of globalism and internationalization efforts related to international service opportunities. The combination of adding to existing literature and better informed decision-making on behalf of post-secondary educational leaders will result in more purposeful execution of internationalization efforts with regard to international service experiences.

Summary

Globalism continues to impact institutions of higher education. “It is ‘not possible for higher education to opt out of the global environment, since its effects are unavoidable’” (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009, p. 7). As a result, educational leadership in post-secondary education must continue to innovate in order to best prepare students for an

increasingly global workplace. One such avenue is by means of international service experiences. However, there is little literature discussing the outcomes of such experiences. This chapter has introduced the study, including the central question, limitations, delimitations, and significance of the study. Definition of frequently used terms relevant to this study have been provided. The purpose of this study was to assess the academic outcomes of international service-learning opportunities and if/how the same experience is used to contextualize the learning process of earning a four-year degree.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature on the internationalization of higher education as the result of globalism, the development and understanding of cultural competencies, and international service. As the purpose of this study was to assess the academic outcomes of international service opportunities and if/how the same experience is used to contextualize the learning process of earning a four-year degree, this chapter will be guided by Boote and Beile's (2005) five criteria for a quality literature review: coverage, synthesis, methodology, significance, and rhetoric. It begins by discussing the internationalization of higher education and how internationalization of post-secondary institutions has impacted the educational process for students. Additionally, there is a brief discussion of the the varying models of internationalizing post-secondary learning institutions. Second, the literature review discusses the acquisition and use of cultural competencies. Beginning with definitions and differing concepts of cultural competencies, this section discusses the process by which inter-cultural competencies are gained. Finally, the literature review provides an understanding of international service-learning opportunities with regard to higher education.

Internationalization and Student Outcomes

As global forces continue to impact institutions of higher education, educational leaders must establish meaningful ways of internationalizing their institutions. The differences between internationalization in the past compared to today's internationalization can be described by the "breadth of clientele served, the outcomes intended, and a reshaping of institutional ethos. There is a growing sense that internationalization is an institutional imperative, not just a desirable possibility" (Hudzik, 2011, p. 7). That imperative is largely due to global forces out of the control of leadership in higher education. "Internationalization has been one of the most

powerful and pervasive forces at work within higher education around the world during the last two decades” (Rumbley, Altbach, & Reisberg, 2012, p. 3). According to Hudzik (2011),

Internationalization can be a means to prepare graduates for life and work in a global market of products, services, and ideas. But besides producing world-conscious graduates and citizenry capable of broad and effective civic engagement, internationalization can seek to harness institutional research energies for a wide set of purposes including security at home and abroad and economic, social, and cultural development in an increasingly borderless and interdependent world (p. 8).

According to the 4th Global Survey conducted by the International Association of Universities, of 1,336 surveyed institutions, 75% reported that they either have a policy on internationalization in place or are currently in the planning stage for such a policy (Internationalization of Higher Education, 2014). Clearly the internationalization process is not a flash in the pan. Rather, it has become a mainstream element of post-secondary institutions world-wide. “Internationalization is considered central to the academic enterprise” (Rumbley, Altbach, and Reisberg, 2012, p. 4).

While higher education seems to be internationalizing across the board, some argue that global inequities are widening as a direct result (Altbach et al., 2009). The uneven playing ground is evidenced world-wide and is not necessarily alleviated by simply providing access. Historically, underserved populations tend to be less well-prepared for higher education than many of their peers. Countries often tend to equate open admission with equal access but low rates of completion raise doubts about whether access alone is sufficient (Altbach, et al., 2009, p. 40).

Therefore, lack of preparation for some can be as significant a barrier as lack of access

for others. “At a minimum, ethical internationalization requires a commitment to such fundamental values as transparency, quality in academic programming and support services, academic freedom, fair treatment of partners and stakeholders, respect for local cultures, and thoughtful allocation of resources” (Rumbley, Altbach, and Reisberg, 2012, p. 6).

As internationalization becomes more commonplace, it is gradually being re-termed Comprehensive Internationalization (CI) (Hudzik, 2011). Hudzik (2011) defines CI as “a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education (p. 2).”

Comprehensive Internationalization is a system-wide approach to the internationalization process. It requires a response to globalism across curricula, among support staff, and by executive level leadership regardless of their purpose or role on campus.

Globalism can be defined in multiple ways. Knight (2003) defined globalism as “the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, and ideas...across borders” (p. 3). With technological advances and an increasingly interconnected world, globalism has become a routine way of life. As globalism increases, institutions of higher education will necessarily need to internationalize on the same trajectory.

Internationalization of higher education. Increasingly, internationalization is being approached strategically. Colleges and universities wishing to internationalize are moving away from activity based internationalization such as international festivals and beginning to approach internationalization strategically (Knight & de Wit, 1997). The strategic approach comes in the form of an internationalized curricula across disciplines. Internationalization across curricula tends to lead toward internationalized policies, procedures, and student services (Lewis, 2007). Nolan and Hunter (2012) outlined four case studies in internationalization that are useful

examples of applied internationalization. In doing so, they note four key components for successful internationalization: leadership, faculty engagement, policy support, and financial support. These four components harken back to Lewis' argument that internationalization must be a system-wide approach rather than a cause of a single department of an institution.

Naturally, leadership must fully support internationalization efforts if the institution is to successfully internationalize. It is the role of leadership to effectively articulate the need for internationalization and justify policies and practices meant to achieve such a goal. As faculty are at the heart of any institution, there must be an agreement by each department to integrate internationalized content in order to truly boast internationalized curricula. Once faculty and leadership are engaged in the process, a mechanism should be put in place that will allow the process to unfold (Nolan & Hunter, 2012). In order to do so, policies and procedures should be clear and include measurable targets and timelines. Finally, internationalization requires funding. As with any good strategic plan, lack of resources stands as a major and often times primary barrier to the success of even the most well thought out plans (Bryson, 1995).

Nolan and Hunter use these four components for successful internationalization as the framework for evaluating four institutions (two in Europe and two in the United States) that have successfully internationalized. As this study is specific to institutions in the United States, the associated literature review only reflects the two institutions in the United States.

Applied internationalization. Both the University of Denver in Colorado and the University of Michigan School of Art and Design have successfully internationalized according to Nolan & Hunter (2012). The University of Denver boasts a 74% participation rate in study abroad opportunities (Nolan & Hunter, 2012). The success began as an initiative of Chancellor Dan Ritchie. When Chancellor Ritchie first conceived of a robust international program, he put

forward \$100,000 of his own money, which supports Nolan and Hunter's assertion that both funding and support from leadership are necessary. Additionally, Chancellor Ritchie consulted the board of trustees and formed a faculty committee to ensure faculty buy-in. Similarly, the School of Art and Design at the University of Michigan enjoys a successful international program. In fact, the UM School of Art and Design require international experience of all students.

Both institutions acknowledge the immense expense of such programs and rely heavily on outside funding. For institutions wishing to implement similar programs, it is important to note the level of faculty and leadership support that both programs enjoy. Additionally, both programs are under constant threat of funding shortfalls.

Most institutions present a fairly complex sociopolitical arena, one in which different interests collide, collude, and combine. To some extent, successful institutional change is luck: a combination of having the right factors in the right place at the right time (Nolan & Hunter, 2012).

In addition to the four basic components of successful internationalization efforts, Knight (2004) provides institutional level outlines. First, Knight (2004) suggests that internationalization efforts should be defined based on activities. For example, curriculum updates, study abroad opportunities, and branch campuses. This gives the institution a clear understanding of what internationalization efforts are underway and offers clear examples of the internationalization process. Next, colleges and universities should take into account the outcomes of internationalization efforts. "Internationalization is presented in the form of desired outcomes such as student competencies, increased profile, more international agreements, and partners or projects" (Knight, 2004, p. 20). This allows all stakeholders of the internationalization process an

understanding of why the institution has implemented internationalization efforts on campus. In the same vein of outcomes, colleges and universities should clearly articulate the rationale for changes in policies and procedures. Finally, internationalization should be “considered to be a process where an international dimension is integrated into teaching, learning, and service functions of the institution” (Knight, 2004, p. 20). All of the aforementioned institutional level approaches should be couched in an understanding of at-home and abroad internationalization efforts. In other words, are the approaches underway on campus the creation of a culture on campus that fosters international mindsets? Similarly, cross-border efforts should be approached from a variety of delivery modes.

Applied internationalization must, of course, result in quality outcomes with regard to the learning experience for students. Global forces require colleges and universities to internationalize. But, in order to ensure relevance, institutions must have student assessment measures in place. Assessment tools should evaluate “student learning to insure that graduates acquire the skills and competencies demanded in the 21st century” (Kuh & Ewell, 2010, p. 1).

This means, among other things, that colleges and universities must become smarter and better at assessing student learning outcomes, at using the resulting data to inform resource allocation and other decisions and at communicating to their constituents how well they are performing (Kuh & Ewell, 2010).

Assessments can be formative or summative. Formative assessment, or formative evaluation (Scriven, 1967) is “the evaluation of educational programmes including curricula, instructional material and the overall teaching methods” (Lau, 2015, p. 510). Scriven describes summative assessment as the assessment that takes place after the program planning has been finalized and put into practice. In other words, according to Scriven, formative assessment takes

place in the planning stage and summative assessment takes place in the applied stage. Scriven (1991) notes “perhaps the best way to put the formative/summative distinction is due to Robert Stake: when the cook tastes the soup, that’s formative evaluation; when the guests taste the soup, that’s summative evaluation (p. 19).” There has been a considerable amount of disagreement on the value of formative and summative assessments and whether or not they’re mutually exclusive (Lau, 2015). However, the literature has begun to defend the two as inextricably linked (Biggs, 1998). For the purposes of this study, Biggs’ argument of linked assessments will be applicable, as student acquisition of cultural competencies are both part of the process and a result of the process.

Suskie (2009) outlines four steps for the assessment of learning goals: establishing learning goals, providing learning opportunities, assessing student learning, and using the results. Olson, Green, and Hill (2006), define global learning outcomes as “desired attitudes and things students should know and do as effective citizens and workers in a global environment” (p. 88). For the leadership engaged in the internationalization process, it is particularly important to establish assessment tools that are specific to the intended outcomes of global activities. Mansilla and Jackson (2011) define global competence as “the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance” (p. xiii). As internationalization is the end goal, a formative assessment must be made to aid students in better understanding why and how they will achieve cultural competencies, followed by a summative assessment of how the acquired cultural competencies will impact their academic and professional futures.

Nolan and Hunter (2012) identify four components for successful internationalization: leadership, faculty engagement, policy support, and financial support. A review of the literature on internationalization efforts and student outcomes revealed a gap. Most of the literature

discusses institutional internationalization efforts and justifies the purpose based on global forces, not on specific student outcomes and how those outcomes might better inform student engagement. In order to explore this lack in the literature, a review of existing literature regarding cultural competencies is necessary.

Intercultural competence. “Intercultural competence is a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that encourages effective and appropriate interactions in a variety of cultural contexts” (Bennett, 2008, p. 97). There are multiple terms used to describe cultural competence. While all are quite similar, each varies in its own way. In order to understand the value of cultural competencies, one must understand the value and terminology of each definition. Terminology such as intercultural competence (Bennett, 2008), intercultural sensitivity (Chen & Starosta, 1997), intercultural effectiveness (Mendenhall et al., 2012), intercultural awareness (Chen, 1997), and intercultural maturity (King & Magolda, 2005) are examples of diversity in terminology.

Intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competencies are by far the most widely used terms in the literature. Intercultural sensitivity “refers to the ‘subjects’ active desire to motivate themselves to understand, appreciate and accept differences from other cultures” (Chen & Starosta 1997, p. 231). Unlike cultural competencies, which are a set of skills and characteristics, intercultural sensitivities are more intrinsically motivated. Another definition for intercultural sensitivities is “an individual’s ability to develop a positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promotes an appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication” (Chen, 1997, p. 5). In many ways, the acquisition of intercultural sensitivities is a dynamic process that requires a personal interest. Therefore, intercultural sensitivities must precede intercultural competencies. Chen (1997) suggests that,

In order to develop a positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences and eventually promote the ability of intercultural competence, interculturally sensitive persons must possess the following elements: self-esteem, self-monitoring, open-mindedness, empathy, interaction involvement, and non-judgment (p. 18).

To become interculturally sensitive requires a process of self-actualization that is absolutely necessary prior to becoming interculturally competent. Unlike intercultural sensitivities, intercultural competencies are a set of skills that will allow one to interact in multi-cultural settings with proficiency. While one might be sensitive to multi-cultural issues, it does not necessarily mean that they are proficient in interactions with such settings. Gudykunst (1991) lists five skills necessary for intercultural competence; mindfulness, cognitive flexibility, tolerance for ambiguity, behavioral flexibility, and cross-cultural empathy. All of these can be gained in the educational setting.

Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) describe the process in three stages; awareness, knowledge, and skills. Beginning with awareness, Hofstede & Hofstede believe that each person is equipped with a mental software based on their upbringing. As one travels through life, they gather certain understandings of the world around them. “Without awareness, one may travel around the world feeling superior and remaining deaf and blind to all clues about the relativity of one’s own mental programming” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, pp.358-359). In other words, awareness is the ability to recognize differences in others and accept them for what they are, simply different. The second stage, according to Hofstede & Hofstede (2004) is knowledge. According to Hofstede & Hofstede,

If we have to interact with particular other cultures, we have to learn about those cultures. We should learn about their symbols, their heroes, and their rituals; where we may never

share their values, we may at least obtain an intellectual grasp of where their values differ from ours (p. 358-359).

Here, Hofstede & Hofstede argue that in order to truly be interculturally competent, one must fully understand the components of other cultures including day to day characteristics that might be more difficult to understand. Finally, the third stage is skills. In this stage, the interculturally competent apply the first two stages, awareness and knowledge, to their interactions within the multicultural context.

Fantini (2000), describes intercultural competence as “double-edged,” referring to the notion that one wishing to become interculturally competent must also look at their native culture. This concept was later used by Peacock (2007).

This notion is captured in the expression “looking out is looking in,” an idea that has permeated the field of intercultural education and has been reiterated throughout the history of education, echoed in disciplines like philosophy, psychology, anthropology, and linguistics, and captured in the lines above by the Chinese philosopher Chung Tsu, written so many years ago (Fantini, 2000, p. 26).

While much of the literature discusses intercultural competence as an understanding of other cultures, it is important to look at one’s native culture in order to contextualize other cultures (Fantini, 2000, Peacock, 2007). According to Fantini, there are three major themes to intercultural competence; “1) the ability to develop and maintain, relationships 2) the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with minimal loss or distortion, and 3) the ability to attain compliance and attain cooperation with others” (Fantini, 2000, p. 27). These traits are germane to interpersonal relationship skills as well, but have an added complexity due to the nature of multicultural interactions (Fantini, 2000).

In order to fully realize the components of intercultural competence listed above, it is important to fully understand how one's own culture impacts those competencies. Culture can be defined as "the values, beliefs, and norms held by a group of people that shape how individuals communicate and behave – that is, how they interact with others" (Clayton, Bringle, & Hatcher, 2013, p. 284). In this context, the acquisition of cultural competencies requires more than simply an understanding of one's own upbringing, but rather an understanding of the culture in which that upbringing was situated. In doing so, a better understanding of the foundations of the familiar culture might better inform an understanding of the foundations of the cultural context in which one is attempting to interact with proficiency.

The process described above can be even further contextualized by using Milton Bennett's (1986) developmental approach to intercultural sensitivities. Bennett's approach has been largely adopted and adapted throughout the literature. But, a purer form of his approach is most applicable to this study. Bennett began by describing a process that leads the ethnocentrist toward "ethnorelativism," a term coined by Bennett as an antonym to ethnocentrism. The basic premise is that the process of becoming interculturally sensitive includes a steady progression across a continuum, beginning with denial.

Denial, according to Bennett, occurs when total isolation from other cultures occurs. This can take the form of physical or social isolation. The result is a feeling of ethnocentrism, which leads to the denial of legitimacy toward other cultures outside of one's native culture. "As such, this position represents the ultimate ethnocentrism, where one's own world view is unchallenged as central to reality" (Bennett, 1986, p. 182). On a small scale, parochialism is far more common than other, more extreme types of denial. For instance, a person living in a small, isolated town will find other cultures to be different on the surface, but not at their foundation (Bennett, 1986).

This typically leads to an understanding of difference on a very broad scale without any nuanced understanding of cultural differences. On a far rarer scale, denial may come in the form of pure ethnocentrism, which includes an extreme sense of superiority over differing cultures in which the ethnocentrist has little understanding.

As one begins the progression across the continuum, they will gradually leave the denial stage and reach a stage of defense. The defense stage results in a “perceived threat to the centrality of one’s world view” (Bennett, 1986, p. 183). By virtue of perceiving the other culture as a threat, there is an inherent recognition of that culture, “thus given meaning.” This is indicative of an improved cultural sensitivity. Most common of the defense stage is the attributing of negative stereotypes. These negative stereotypes typically are attributed across an entirely distinct cultural group. “The denigration may be attached to race, religion, age, gender, or any other assumed indicator of difference” (Bennett, 1986, p. 183). Conversely, while still nested in the defense stage, one might attribute a sense of superiority in their own culture, thereby demoting the value of other cultures in general. Both strategies fall within the definition of ethnocentrism, nonetheless.

The next stage along the continuum is minimization, which is an attempt to mute differences between one’s own culture and other cultures. Instead of pointing out differences, in this stage there is an overwhelming amount of attention put on cultural similarities. Unlike denial and defense, this stage does not look upon other cultures negatively. Rather, it deems differences unimportant or virtually non-existent. In large part, minimization regards all cultures as derivatives of a common source, thus diminishing any acknowledge of differences. This happens, oftentimes, when discussing religion. In many religious discussions, there is an underlying notion that all people come from the same place and share a similar foundational

background. This renders cultural differences mute and amplifies similarities. While this stage does not include such extreme ethnocentrism, it exhibits ethnocentrism nonetheless.

The final two steps are the end of the continuum. Acceptance follows minimization and is really the first stage of ethnorelativism. Acceptance occurs in two distinctly different steps. The first step is “acceptance of behavioral difference” (Bennett, 1986, p. 184). Behavioral differences can be characterized by language and non-verbal communication. The second step is “acceptance of the underlying cultural value differences which may represent profoundly different organizations of reality” (Bennett, 1986, pp. 184-185). Lastly, adaptation takes place after the first four stages are accomplished. Adaptation comes in many forms such as empathy and the ability to act outside of one’s native culture. Once adaptation has occurred, the ethnocentric mindset will have been replaced by ethnorelativism.



Figure 1. Bennett’s Developmental Approach to Intercultural Sensitivities

While the process of acquiring intercultural competencies has been understood for quite sometime, there has only recently been a model for assessing such competencies. Darla Deardorff (2006) was concerned that a systematic and generally accepted assessment model was not available. As a result, she consulted with 23 scholars working in international higher education to outline a series of identifiers within the context of cultural competencies. She began with a definition of assessment as “the systematic collection, review, and use of information

about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving...learning and development” (Palomba & Banta, 1999, p. 4). She then began to define measurable outcomes of international experiences that, at the time, had yet to be defined. Deardorff established five elements for assessing intercultural competencies. In doing so, she was able to create a framework for more targeted assessment tools that are geared toward specific assessments based on individual experiences.

Beginning with *attitude*, Deardorff set the foundation for all other outcomes of intercultural competence. Attitude is central because it demonstrates one’s ability to leave their native culture and approach other cultures with an open mind. Respect (valuing others and cultural diversity), openness (to intercultural learning and other cultures), curiosity, and discovery (tolerating uncertainty) were key themes in Deardorff’s findings. Naturally, these attitudinal components are necessary in order to truly embrace other cultures. Without the appropriate attitude toward other cultures and one’s own culture, Bennett’s final stage of acceptance will not be reached. An appropriate attitude is foundation for gaining the knowledge necessary for interacting with other cultures.

Knowledge, begins with one’s willingness to acknowledge how native cultures have played a role in personal growth and the ability to recognize how one’s native culture informs decision making. Additionally, it’s the understanding of other worldviews and “sociolinguistic” awareness. All of those interviewed in Deardorff’s study agreed that the ability to perceive from other’s cultural perspectives was a critical component to intercultural competencies. The ability to perceive from the cultural perspectives of others allows for a deeply contextualized understanding of other cultures that make up the basis for cultural attributes that are easily seen on the surface. In other words, assessment of cultural knowledge needs to go beyond the more

superficial components of culture such as food, language, etc., and include a richer understanding of cultural components. Deardorff placed *skills* parallel to knowledge. Skills include the ability to listen, observe and interpret as well as analyze, evaluate, and relate. These run parallel to knowledge as they are the abilities necessary to put knowledge into practice.

The next level of the process is *Desired Internal Outcomes* (Deardorff, 2006). Deardorff argues that the acquired and cultivated attitudes, knowledge, and skills result in a series of desired internal outcomes such as flexibility, adaptability, and ethnorelative perspective and empathy. Adaptability is the ability to adjust to different communication styles and behaviors. Flexibility refers to one's ability to select and use appropriate communication tools. These characteristics allow one to interact with other cultures with respect and an understanding of the value to other cultures.

The final level is *Desired External Outcomes*. These outcomes are the culmination of attitudes, knowledge, skills and desired internal outcomes that result in "behaving and communicating effectively and appropriately (based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes) to achieve one's goals to some degree" (Deardorff, 2006. p. 254).

Deardorff's model for assessing intercultural competence remains relevant in large part due to the fact that it was the result of consultation with dozens of colleagues working in international education. Her model for assessment is in many ways similar to Bennett's developmental approach to cultural sensitivities. Both works include a process by which cultural competencies are gained. For Bennett, the process works along a continuum, while Deardorff sees it as a set of stackable experiences.

The aforementioned means by which one can become interculturally competent is part of an area of scholarship that is based on the fact that global forces are increasingly impacting the

learning process. As a result, institutions of higher education are constantly searching for how best to internationalize, and therefore are continually entertaining why they should internationalize. “The 21st century is one of unrelenting globalization. The bumper sticker wisdom that implores, ‘think globally, act locally,’ has become a reality and a necessity for educators, businesspeople, politicians, scientists, journalists, entertainers, athletes, and inventors alike” (Mendenhall et al., 2012. p. 3).

Globalism, however, is a complex force that is not easily understood. In 2004, Lane, Maznevski, Mendenhall, and McNeett discussed this issue in *The Blackwell Handbook of Global Management: A Guide to Managing Complexity*. The handbook was a multi-national, multi-researcher approach to globalism research. The authors describe globalism as an integration of multiple sources such as technology, commerce, and culture. While discussing the complexity of globalism, they point out that everyone must confront globalism, but business people and educators must be particularly concerned with such forces (Lane, Maznevski, Mendenhall, & McNett, 2004).

Numerous intercultural competencies have been identified throughout the literature (Mendenhall and Osland, 2002). With over fifty identified competencies, things can be simplified by categorizing them into six distinct dimensions: cross-cultural relationship skills, traits and values, cognitive orientation, global business expertise, global organizing expertise, and visioning (Mendenhall et al., 2012). These dimensions fall neatly into one of two categories. The first can be seen as intercultural interactions at the person or small group level. The second involves macro-level global business interactions. As this study does not involve macro-level global business intercultural competencies, this literature review will not discuss global business expertise, global organizing expertise, or visioning. However, cross-cultural relationship skills,

traits and values, and cognitive orientation are relevant to this study.

In 1991 Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou created The International Adjustment Model (IA), which “focused on the traits and competencies that positively influenced heightened levels of success in interacting with people from other cultures in overseas or cross- culturally significant settings” (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991, p.6). The IA Model was then used by the Kozai Group to create a set of assessments for intercultural assessment called the Global Competency Inventory (GCI). Using the GCI, they then created the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale.

The Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES) is a less complex version of the GCI, developed to address the need for an assessment tool that can be used in contexts such as those found in many educational settings, where economy and ease of administration are critical program elements (Mendenhall et al., 2012, p. 6).

The IES measures fewer competencies than the GCI, with increased focus on competencies that are necessary for intercultural effectiveness. It measures for three factors that play a key role in intercultural effectiveness: *Continuous Learning*, *Interpersonal Engagement*, and *Hardiness*. Each of these three factors is home to two intercultural competencies that are explained below.

Continuous Learning is based upon one’s ability to continually understand other cultures (Mendenhall et al., 2012). This dimension assesses how people approach other cultures. It focuses attention on how well people are able to regularly assess themselves as well as the outside cultural components around them and how the two shape an intercultural environment. This dimension is measured by assessing two cultural competencies: Self-awareness and Exploration. The value of assessing these particular competencies is that they are both intrinsic motivators for working within an intercultural environment. The train of thought is that people

who are continually striving for improved proficiency in these areas are more likely to interact comfortably with people from other cultures and backgrounds (Mendenhall et al). Mendenhall, et al. (2012) defines self-awareness as follows:

Self-Awareness (SA) refers to the degree to which people are aware of: 1) their strengths and weaknesses in interpersonal skills, 2) their own philosophies and values, 3) how past experiences have helped shape them into who they are as a person, and 4) the impact their values and behavior have on relationships with others (p. 7).

Self-awareness is the ability to constantly look both within and without in order to achieve the greatest understanding of others and how one influences relationships (Mendenhall, 2012). In the self-awareness assessment, high scorers tend to have a high quality understanding of themselves and others, and they consider that understanding valuable. Low scorers, on the other hand, place little to no value on an in-depth understanding of other cultures and backgrounds. As a result, people who score high in self-awareness are more open to gaining other cultural competencies. Conversely, people who score low in self-awareness tend to self-isolate, which creates barriers for the acquisition of other competencies. Jokenin (2005) considers the self-awareness competency one of the most important and foundational competencies. The global leadership model echoes Jokenin (Goldsmith, 2003). Goldsmith argues that a high level of self-awareness allows people to work in diverse environments and address personal weaknesses by interacting with others who do not share the same weakness. This hearkens back to Mendenhall's statement that high scorers in self-awareness are typically able to self-improve. This assertion was reinforced throughout the literature (Wills & Barnham, 1994; Chen, 1987; Bird & Osland, 2004; Whetten & Cameron, 2005; Mendenhall et al., 2012; Goldsmith, et al., 2003).

The second dimension of Continuous Learning is Exploration. Exploration is the willingness to actively pursue a deeper understanding of other cultures. It requires a deeper understanding of cultural differences that will transcend stereotypes and assumptions. In order to do so, one must regularly challenge themselves to step out of their comfort zone and explore new cultures and experiences whenever possible. It entails an internal desire to try new things and a constant drive for self-betterment and self-actualization. Exploration emerged as a major theme in the literature as did Self-Awareness.

The combination of Self-Awareness and Exploration comprise the Continuous Learning dimension and offer specific benchmarks to be met for assessing cultural competencies. As stated earlier, these competencies are based on intrinsic motivators and are more behavioral traits than anything. The cultivation of such competencies typically leads to the second dimension, Interpersonal Engagement (Mendenhall et al., 2012). Similar to interpersonal relationship skills, Interpersonal Engagement includes the ability to comfortably interact with others even in uncomfortable situations. The ability to engage in new relationships and cultivate those relationships is a critical component of a robust set of cultural competencies (Mendenhall, 2012). This dimension is measured by assessing Global Mindset and Relationship Interest.

Global Mindset is assessed by determining one's interest in learning about other cultures and the people who occupy those cultures. This can take place by many means, such as media and film. Critical to this dimension is one's eagerness to seek out learning opportunities without being prompted. It must be a self-directed activity in order to score high on this assessment. Evidence of this competency demonstrates the ability to adapt within the confines of multi-cultural experiences. The second component of Interpersonal Engagement is Relationship Interest.

Relationship Interests measures one's desire to maintain and cultivate relationships with people from other background and cultures. This can be defined as "the ability to develop long-lasting friendships with host nationals" (Oddou & Mendenhall, 1984, p. 41). The ability to develop and maintain relationships for long periods of time demonstrates the ability to interact with others despite differences of opinion and background. This particular intercultural competency is critical when immersed in intercultural experiences that require a deep understanding of others that only comes from close relationships (Oddou & Mendenhall, 1984).

Finally, Mendenhall et al. turn to Hardiness as the third dimension that is applicable to this study. Building relationships and having an earnest interest in learning about other cultures is critical to working successfully with other cultures. However, working in multi-cultural settings will not be without roadblocks. Therefore, Mendenhall, et al. have determined that Hardiness, or the ability to remain positive and focused in the face of challenging situations, is another hallmark of quality cultural competencies. "Activities and attributes that serve to strengthen self-esteem, self-confidence, and mental hygiene are therefore key to intercultural effectiveness" (Oddou & Mendenhall, 1984, p. 40). In other words, Hardiness can be seen as one's ability to maintain a high level of positivity and to continually view other cultures through a positive lens. This dimension is comprised of Positive Regard and Emotional Resilience.

Positive Regard is the penchant to treat those from other backgrounds and cultures with positivity and respect. This, as with other intercultural competencies, is another inherent trait that is critical for successfully working in a multi-cultural environment. Those who score high on this assessment are naturally looking for the best in others. Rather than resorting to stereotypes, they tend to assign positive traits as a natural inclination (Oddou & Mendenhall, 1984). As a result, high scorers in this category naturally attract those from other cultures, which

results in better interpersonal communications, which then results in less frequent relationship roadblocks. Conversely, low scorers naturally assign negative, predetermined stereotypes to other cultures. Inevitably this results in immediate distrust by people from other cultures, which results in regular relationship obstacles.

Positive regard includes a paradox. While one must remain positive about other cultures and constantly look for the strengths within other cultures, they must also recognize and understand that all cultures are fallible. Acknowledging this fact will allow one to remain open minded about these flaws and mindful of how they might impact intercultural relationships. People “who were able to balance this paradox well were not taken advantage of by the people around them, but were instead accepted by them and were able to successfully work and live with them” (Mendenhall, et al., 2012, p. 11).

Emotional Resilience can be defined as the ability to cope with stressful interaction in multi-cultural situations (Mendenhall, 2012). This reflects a psychological willingness to carry on when intercultural communications face hardship. By virtue of being able to manage emotions in difficult times, one will be more likely to employ other cultural competencies in order to manage difficult situations. Emotionally resilient people have an innate ability to cope with challenging situations while remaining positive while still actively employing other cultural competencies in order to effectively communicate in multi-cultural situations (Mendenhall, 2012).

The Intercultural Effectiveness Scale is a good framework for understanding inherent abilities of those with high levels of intercultural competencies. As a result, it serves as a quality guideline for qualitatively investigating intercultural competencies. The three dimensions, Continuous Learning, Interpersonal Engagement, and Hardiness offer those wishing to

qualitatively assess intercultural competencies a set of key features present in everyone with heightened intercultural competencies.

International Service Learning

Service learning, and therefore international service-learning, derives from experiential learning and a pedagogical interest in offering students real life experiences that can be used to contextualize the learning process. John Dewey (1938), believed fully in the educational process, but questioned conventional instructional methods. He believed that students must be exposed to experiential learning in order to connect students with lessons. This would enhance the learning experience, making it more effective (Dewey, 1938). Recent literature has echoed Dewey's assertion. "In general, experiential learning enhances conceptual understanding, increases student ability to apply abstract concepts, and involves greater opportunities for general learning (e.g., communication, cooperation and teamwork, leadership skills) than traditional lectures, readings, and examinations" (Crabtree, 2008, p. 26). In other words, the learning process is considered more effective if students are given the opportunity to apply the tenets of traditional learning to a real-life situation. The more engaged students are in the process, the more likely they are to fully grasp the content and use the content to inform the educational process (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999).

This conceptual process was put into the Experiential Learning Model (Kolb, Rubin, & McIntyre, 1974). The model illustrates the process beginning with a concrete experience, moving through observation and reflection, the process eventually moves on to testing the concept in new situations.

Kolb's model has become a foundational concept for the service learning model. However, Kolb's model is far from a complete model for service learning and international

service learning (Crabtree, 2008; Jacoby, 2003; Rosenberg, 2000). Of note, community involvement is missing from this framework, but is a critical component of service learning and international service learning (Crabtree, 2008, Jacoby, 2003). As we've seen in the review of cultural competency literature, rich and meaningful relationships are critical to the acquisition of intercultural competencies. These competencies are necessary for a successful international service experience (Eyler & Giles, 1994). Service Learning experiences "are intended to reciprocally benefit communities and their members in addition to students" (Crabtree, 2008, p. 20).

Reflection is a key component to successful service learning. Both self-reflection and reflection on activities gives participants an opportunity to truly examine their experiences and internalize the outcomes (Bringle et. al., 2009; Crabtree, 2008). According to Turner (2017):

Reflection offers volunteers an opportunity to gain a higher level of thinking on critical issues. Both individual reflections and group reflection allow students to confront previously held misconceptions on issues facing society today. In doing so students will begin to realize that these issues are stitched into the fabric of their community. But, so is the new level of civic mindedness that they've created by experiencing a robust and meaningful volunteer experience. Student understanding of the world around them will become far more focused and detailed following an evocative reflection (p. 183).

According to Bringle, et al. (2003), there are multiple means by which students can reflect including journals, research papers, case studies, directed readings, and class presentations. This tenet holds true for international service (Crabtree, 2008; Dewey, 1938, King, 2004; Mezirow, 2003).

One of the peculiar elements of international service learning as an educational process is

the necessity for a cross-cultural immersion. As highlighted earlier, multi-cultural interactions result in the acquisition of intercultural competencies that are seen as positive developments in an increasingly global society. “Crossing contextual borders initiates a complex transformational learning process” (Kiely, 2005, p. 10). In order to ensure the best outcomes for students, educators must adequately prepare students for such a transformational, cross-cultural experience (Crabtree, 2008). Similar to the acquisition of intercultural competencies, international service experiences result in a transformational process (Kiely, 2005). The transformational process, according to Kiely (2005), includes contextual border crossing, dissonance, personalizing, processing, and connecting.

Contextual border crossing “describes how *personal, structural, historical, and programmatic* elements of the service-learning context frame the unique nature and impact of students’ service-learning experience, either enhancing or hindering possibilities for transformational learning” (Kiely, 2005, p. 9). The personal aspects of contextual border crossing include all of the personal background that one brings to service-learning such as political viewpoints, educational background, basic understandings of other cultures, and linguistic skills. This component of contextual border crossing is similar to the models mentioned above by which intercultural competencies are acquired beginning with one’s personal background (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2004; Fantini, 2000; Peacock, 2012; Bennett, 1986; Deardorff, 2006; Mendenhall, et al., 2012).

The second element of contextual border crossing is structural, which is made up of race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. This component highlights the fact that students not only physically cross borders, but they also cross borders of social construct and bring with them the social construct whence they came (Kiely, 2005). This allows them to interact with other cultures

from an outside perspective, thereby broadening the perspective of all parties. Again, this is echoed in the literature. Similarly, the historical aspect takes into account the history of each culture and nation involved, including political background, which adds context to relationships between individuals from each nation. Lastly, the programmatic elements contribute greatly to contextual border crossing. This refers to the specific program which the student is utilizing. There are differences in programs ranging from immersive courses requiring a 24/7 for a full semester to short-term programs which only require a week long commitment (Kiely, 2005). The level of contextual border crossing and the extent that students are transformed are largely dependent on the depth of the components associated with contextual border crossing; *personal, structural, historical, and programmatic*.

Another element to the transformational service-learning process is dissonance. Dissonance refers to a level of experiential incongruence (Keily, 2008). That is, participants come to a service-learning experience with a frame of understanding from past experiences that, to some degree, will be challenged by the new paradigm of service-learning. According to Kiely (2008),

There is a relationship between dissonance type, intensity, and duration and the nature of learning processes that result. Low to high intensity dissonance acts as triggers for learning. High-intensity dissonance catalyzes ongoing learning. Dissonance types are historical, environmental, social physical, economic, political, cultural, spiritual, communicative, and technological (p. 8).

In other words, taking one out of their comfort zone accelerates the learning process during service-learning experiences.

Processing is a means for students to better understand their service-learning experience.

This can happen with reflection exercises, dialogue, exercise, or observation. Processing allows student to engage with themselves in thought that will help them internalize their experience. Furthermore, it gives students an opportunity for a greater depth of thought on issues facing the community they're serving. The processing element to the transformational service-learning process is very similar to reflection discussed earlier in the literature review. The value of reflection on service opportunities is reflected throughout the literature (Turner, 2017; Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Finally, students find the learning process more robust if they're able to connect to the community in which they serve (Kiely, 2008). This, in addition to the aforementioned elements, comes from regular interaction with members of the community in a variety of arenas.

"Examples include performing skits, singing, dancing, swimming, attending church, completing chores, playing games, home stays, sharing food, treating wounds, and sharing stories" (Kiely, 2008, p. 8).

Kiely's theory on the transformational service-learning process is built upon Mezirow's (2003) transformational learning theory. Mezirow's theory says that leaders must experience a change in how they see the world before they can truly transform (Mezirow, 2013). Kiely's theory, however, applies the theory with much of the scholarship on the acquisition of cultural competencies in order to develop a theory specifically on service-learning. The theory is applicable as it parallels many theories on the acquisition of intercultural competencies.

The outcomes of service-learning are either cognitive or affective (Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring, & Kerrigan, 2001). Cognitive outcomes include critical thinking and problem-solving skills, while affective outcomes include changes in attitude and beliefs. "Most of the service-learning research to date has collected psychological data about student outcomes"

(Gelmon et al., 2001, p. 20). From an institutional standpoint, expected outcomes of service-learning include good citizenship, leadership development, employability of graduates, enhancement of learning, as well as solutions to complex societal problems, effective approaches to economic and community development and a means to accomplish a campus mission of service to society (Ramaley, 1997). Additionally, “service-learning, which, at its best, allows students to confront issues and problems in complex natural contexts, appears to be ideally suited to help students develop a deeper understanding of subject matter, a practical knowledge of how community decision-making processes work, and strategies for transferring knowledge and problem solving skills to new situations” (Eyler, 2000, p. 12). According to Tonkin (2011),

Outcomes assessment is crucially important if study abroad and international experiences are to find a firm foothold in the curriculum and if curricular designers are to make wise decisions that earn the support of the executive leadership of the campus. Research needs to determine how [international service-learning] contributes to a student’s readiness and preparedness to learn after returning to the home campus (p. 208).

Additionally, Bringle et al. (2011), suggest that

international service-learning, should be guided by theory, involve clearly defined constructs, account for differences among groups, use psychometrically defensible measures with multiple indicators, use multiple methods with converging results across different methods, apply designs that result in confidence in the conclusions reached, and have “implications for teaching and learning in general (p. 285).

When instituting international service-learning opportunities, institutions of higher education must be able to clearly articulate rationale for doing so. “Traditionally, rationales have been presented in four groups: social/cultural, political, academic, and economic” (Knight & de

Wit, 1997, p. 329). The International Associations of Universities (IAU) conducted a multi-year survey of institutions regarding the rationale for internationalizing. In all three years of surveys the prioritized rationales changed places. The rationale for internationalization and for service-learning can be combined to provide a rationale for international service-learning. For instance, students who participated in service opportunities developed a greater tolerance and appreciation for other cultures (Scales, Blyth, Berkas, Kielsmeier, 2000). Additionally, service-learning creates responsible civic-minded individuals/students.

In addition to institutional reasoning, there are multiple positive student outcomes that must be taken into account when considering the justification for international service-learning outcomes. “Attitudinal, dispositional, and developmental outcomes like world-mindedness or cultural relativism are key values for education abroad. For many program directors, witnessing students’ empathic responses to another culture is the big payoff” (Rubin & Matthews, 2013, p. 75). These student outcomes coupled with the aforementioned outcomes of service experiences give educators an opportunity to offer students a well-rounded program that not only brings them closer to critical issues abroad, but also provides an opportunity for the development of intercultural competencies.

There are academic benefits to service-learning as well. A study on the writing quality of 33 essays written by first-year composition students revealed a significant gap in quality between the treatment group, which participated in service-learning projects, and the control group (Wurr, 2002). The service-learning students scored 8% higher in holistic scoring and 13% higher in analytic scoring. In another study on academic performance and service-learning, the academic records of 477 students taking a child development course were examined (Strage, 2004). Students who had participated in service-learning consistently outperformed their peers. While

this study did not yield statistical significance, it did showcase the impact of service-learning on academic success. The results of Strage's study agree with the results of Wurr's study in that they both show positive impacts on academic performance through the use of service-learning.

There are, however, those who dispute the value of service-learning in academia. Boyte (1991) argued that community engagement was not enough to satisfy the needs of young people. Rather than engaging young people in politics, Boyte (1991) argued that

Service-learning simply connected students to their community. From the perspective of civic education, the weakness of community service lies in a conceptual limitation.

Service lacks a vocabulary that draws attention to the public world that extends beyond personal lives and local communities. Most service programs include little learning about the policy dimensions of issues that students address through person-to-person efforts.

Volunteers rarely have the wherewithal to reflect on the complex dynamics of power, race, and class that are created when middle-class youths go out to "serve" in low-income areas (p. 766).

Boyte's assertion is somewhat out of date. But, it is indicative of a greater concern over the merits of service-learning. His concerns have been echoed throughout the literature. For instance, Alt (1997) expressed concerns that most service-learning experiences do not have a specific academic focus in mind. More recently, Sheffield (2005) raised concerns over the definition of service-learning, or rather, the over-defining of service-learning. Sheffield (2005) expressed his concerns by saying,

The practice of defining, and then defining, and then defining again (rather than a reasonable and evolving re-defining) has accomplished the same result for service-learning: by being everything for everyone, service-learning is quickly becoming nothing.

If your students are interacting with the community, you can call it service-learning and receive service-learning grant monies regardless of how it is really understood and really practiced (p. 47).

Sheffield furthers his argument by describing the service-learning community as providing no philosophical foundation for the rationale behind service learning. It can be argued that service-learning dissenters are the outliers as there has been steady support for service-learning throughout the literature with little disagreement of its merits. Service-learning programs have been proven beneficial throughout the literature (Carpenter & Jacobs, 1994; Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda and Yee, 2002; Prentice & Robinson, 2007; Burns, 1998; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004; Sax, Astin, Korn & Gilmartin, 1999; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 2003). Indeed, even Sheffield (2005) is quick to point out that

Service-learning, is a pedagogy that is rooted in the progressive, pragmatic, constructivist notion of education championed by such folks as John Dewey, William Kilpatrick, and more recently, Janet Eyler and Dwight Giles - a philosophical position I find compelling in both its conceptual structure and its resulting practice (p. 46).

Carpenter and Jacobs (1994) described the Southern University System as a believer in volunteerism. When studying the Center for Service Learning at Baton Rouge, they discovered that “students who entered the program with great reluctance, returned for more volunteer work well beyond the graduation requirements” (Carpenter & Jacobs, 1994, p. 97). Additionally, those students had improved academic performance. Those students had come to understand the importance of becoming part of one’s community. The American Association of Community College (AACC) reported a study in which students choose service-learning opportunities in the future based on experiencing service-learning courses in the past. Not only did students report a

better understanding of the material being delivered, they also reported a greater connection to their community (Prentice & Robinson, 2007). The same study found that students reported a greater retention of material because of the “real-life consequences” (Prentice & Robinson, 2007, p. 8), which echoes Dewey’s assertion from nearly eighty years prior. Sax et al. (1999) reported that students were more likely to learn and retain the material because it was necessary in order to work effectively in the community.

The impacts of service-learning on students remained relatively consistent and positive throughout the literature. The literature on faculty engagement was similarly consistent. Jacoby (2003) reported that faculty found service-learning “engaging in a deeper intellectual discourse and for exploring the ethical implications of that discourse” (Jacoby, 2003, p. 293). Miller (1994) conducted a study that showed 91% of teachers teaching service-learning courses believed they had an impact on their community. In a survey asking educators about their experience with service-learning, a large number believed that service-learning was associated with student success and school effectiveness in their community (Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004).

The literature review on service-learning reveals a near consensus on the value of service-learning experiences for the student, faculty, institution, and community. For the purposes of this study, the most relevant findings relate to student outcomes. The literature on student outcomes and assessment based on service-learning make it clear that students achieve better learning outcomes when traditional education has an experiential service component.

Conclusion and Synthesis

This literature review has discussed the internationalization of post-secondary institutions including models for internationalization, the acquisition and assessment of intercultural competencies, and international service-learning. The literature review shows a near consensus

on the necessity to internationalize post-secondary education as well as the value of intercultural competencies when facing global interactions. There is a similar consensus with regard to international service-learning. There is a great deal of agreement on the three subjects discussed in the literature review. The remainder of this chapter will synthesize the literature review in order to connect the three major themes.

Deardorff (2006), marked attitude as the initial stage of acquiring intercultural competencies. Attitude is considered foundational because it proves one's ability to respect other cultures while away from their native culture. Attitude can take many stages based on where one is in the process. Bennett (2008), described the process by which one moves from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativity along a continuum.

Bennett's continuum begins with denial, which is a complete isolation from other cultures, whether it be social, physical, or both. This results in "the ultimate ethnocentrism" (Bennett, 1986, p. 1820). Those who have no exposure to outside cultures will naturally, according to Bennett, defend their native culture as superior to that of others, hence Bennett's description of ultimate ethnocentrism. The next stage is defense, which is the result of a perceived threat by other cultures. This is still defined as ethnocentrism as it demonstrates one's inability to see other cultures in anything other than negative. Next comes minimization. Minimization occurs when other cultures are minimized when compared to one's native culture. This is the first stage along the continuum, according to Bennett, that is not classified as extreme ethnocentrism. Finally, acceptance occurs when one accepts behavioral differences and the "underlying cultural value differences which may represent profoundly different organizations of reality" (Bennett, 1986, p. 184-185). This stage is immediately followed by adaptation in which empathy and the ability to act outside of one's native culture occurs. Bennett's continuum serves

as an initial framework for the gravitation from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism, a term coined by Bennett. Following this continuum, a series of conceptual models for the acquisition and assessment of intercultural competencies overlap to create a synthesis throughout the literature on the process by which one becomes interculturally competent.

Deardorff (2006) developed a framework for assessing intercultural competencies that is congruent with other outcomes assessments and models for the acquisition of intercultural assessments (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2004; Mendenhall et al., 2012; Mendenhall & Osland, 2002; Jokenin, 2005; Goldsmith, Greenberg, Robertson, & Hu-Chan, 2003; Wills & Barnham, 1994; Chen, 1987; Bird & Osland, 2004; Whetten & Cameron, 2005; Gudykunst, 1991; Kiely, 2008). Deardorff's model begins with attitude. Attitude is critical when interacting with other cultures because it shows one's ability, or inability, to leave their native culture behind when interacting with other cultures. Deardorff approached her model from the standpoint of assessment. Her research concluded that respect, openness, curiosity, and discovery were critical themes for those who have achieved a high level of intercultural competencies with regard to attitude. Deardorff's understanding of attitude parallels Kiely's contextual border crossing in the international service-learning literature.

Kiely, described a transformational process when participating in international service-learning that included contextual border crossing. Contextual border crossing was then further broken down into personal, structural, historical, and programmatic components. The first three components fall in the attitude category and dovetail nicely with Deardorff's assertions. First, in contextual border crossing, students bring with them backgrounds that are unique to their personal experiences and native culture such as political viewpoints, education, and understanding of non-native cultures. The personal components that students bring to

international service-learning experiences are key to Deardorff's assessment of attitude because students may rely too heavily on their native culture, thus blinding them of seeing new cultures with an open mind. The structural component of contextual border crossing refers to one's race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. In many cases, the structural components will have a large influence on attitude, which can result in better or worse attitudes toward new cultures (Deardorff, 2006). These elements are critical in forming one's attitude toward other cultures (Kiely, 2008). According to Kiely (2008) one's personal history will play a significant role in how easily they're able to acquire intercultural competencies. These three components of international service-learning experiences can be summed up as their background and how it shapes their attitude toward non-native cultures.

As stated earlier in the literature review, the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES) is a "less complex version of the GCI" (Mendenhall et al., 2012, p. 6). The Global Competency Inventory (GCI) is a intercultural competency assessment tool developed by the Kozai Group. The IES measures three factors, one of which is continuous learning. The continuous learning component measures one's ability to constantly understand and learn about other cultures (Mendenhall et al., 2012). Those who score high on this assessment are able to evaluate their native culture as well as the culture of others with minimal bias (Mendenhall et al., 2012). This dimension of the IES is measured by assessing self-awareness and exploration, both of which are intrinsic motivators. These, too, can be seen as attitudinal components. In this assessment, high scorers are constantly striving for a heightened level of self-awareness while simultaneously learning about other cultures (Mendenhall et al. 2012). Self-awareness is a foundational competency (Jokenin, 2005). Finally, Gudykunst (1991) lists mindfulness as a skill necessary for intercultural competence. Mindfulness is yet another trait within the attitude category.

The second outcome identified by Deardorff is knowledge. Knowledge includes both an understanding of one's native culture and the ability to understand non-native cultures (Deardorff, 2006). With regard to other cultures, this competency is the ability to understand other cultures for a deeply contextual understanding, rather than a superficial understanding of culture traits on the surface such as food and language. Knowledge as an overarching category relates to the first two of three stages of a process that results in intercultural competence (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2004). Awareness, according to Hofstede & Hofstede, is based on one's ability to observe the cultural differences around them, thus preventing an isolated view that results in ethnocentrism (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2004). Hofstede & Hofstede also classify knowledge as a critical component of intercultural competence. Specifically, they argue that a high level of intercultural competence results in a deep understanding of other cultures including "symbols, their heroes, and their rituals" (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2004, pp. 358-359). Furthermore, they argue that in order to be truly interculturally competent, one must fully understand the nuance involved with other cultures that are not easily seen in a brief interaction.

This concept is echoed by Kiely's (2008) discussion of dissonance. Kiely argues that student who experiences international service-learning will bring with them a set of ideas and understandings from their past experiences. Those ideas and understandings will necessarily be challenged by serving in an international setting and engaging in regular immersed interactions with other cultures. This will begin with experiential incongruence (Kiely, 2008). Dissonance, then, is the confrontation of prior experiences and beliefs with new cultures and ways of living (Kiely, 2008). Kiely's research shows that this type of experience has a tremendous impact on the learning process. In addition to experiential incongruence, Kiely describes processing as an important element to cultivating intercultural competencies. Processing takes many forms, but in

service-learning the most common is reflection activities. Processing provides students with the opportunity to internalize what they've experienced, making the experience more profound (Kiely, 2008; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Turner, 2017).

Another area in which one can exercise intercultural competence is in skills. Hofstede & Hofstede (2004) describe skills as putting awareness and knowledge to use. For the purposes of this study, skills are discussed as a set of personal abilities that allow one to appropriately interact with those from another culture. These include interpersonal skills as well as observation skills. But, according to Fantini (2000), intercultural interactions require more nuance than interpersonal skills used among people from a similar cultural background. Deardorff (2006) also describes skills as necessary component to intercultural competence. She, however, lists skills as being parallel to knowledge. In other words, skills and knowledge go hand in hand (Deardorff, 2006). Mendenhall & Osland (2002) defined over fifty intercultural competencies, which can be categorized in many different ways. Two categories identified by Mendenhall & Osland are cross-cultural relationship skills and cognitive orientation. These two categories highlight the importance of having a set of skills that will allow for ease of communication and the ability to observe and learn from other cultures. As Peacock puts it, looking out is looking in (Peacock, 2012).

The aforementioned components to intercultural competencies, which can be acquired through international service-learning, lead students to a set of desired internal outcomes (Deardorff, 2006). These desired internal outcomes that result from cultivating attitudes knowledge, and skills can be considered personality traits (Deardorff, 2006). Tolerance for ambiguity is one such trait (Gudykunst, 1991). Gudykunst suggest that students should participate in self-assessment to determine whether or not they possess the traits necessary for

cultural competence. In doing so, they should be assessing their own mindfulness. Mindfulness can be defined as the ability to accept new information or openness to new perspectives (Gudykunst, 1991). Mindfulness, then, leads to behavioral flexibility and traits and values that are indicative of the interculturally competent (Gudykunst, 1991; Mendenhall et al., 2012). The literature review reveals that the acquisition of intercultural competencies results in traits and values that have evolved from, at the extreme, ethnocentrism, to that of a state of ethnorelativism (Bennett, 2008). In addition to desired internal outcomes, students with international service-learning experience will acquire desired external outcomes. In short, these are the result of exercising the internal outcomes (Deardorff, 2006).

The literature review focuses heavily on intercultural competencies and how they're acquired through international service-learning. Of particular note should be the justification of international service-learning. This literature review highlights the institutional rationale for providing international service-learning opportunities to students (Knight & de Wit, 1997; Rubin & Matthews, 2013, Dewey, 1938). Institutional rationale includes social and cultural benefits to students and the communities they serve. These benefits include a greater understanding by students of critical issues facing their community such as homelessness, food insecurity, and domestic violence. In doing so, students will have the opportunity to contextualize the content presented during coursework. Another rationale is academic. Students will have a far better understanding of content if delivery is paired with real-world experiences (Dewey, 1938).

Providing international service-learning opportunities is one strategy for internationalizing a campus. The internationalization of higher education is of critical importance for student outcomes (Hudzik, 2011; Rumbley, Altbach, and Reisberg, 2012; Knight, 2003; Knight & de Wit, 1997). Therefore, the rationale for internationalization, at least in part, is that it

provides an added element to the educational process that will better prepare students for life after college. The literature review has shown that comprehensive internationalization is critical in order to prepare students for the increasing impacts of globalism.

This chapter has focused on three primary areas of research; internationalization of higher education, the acquisition of intercultural competencies, and international service-learning. These three main points are relative to this study as the purpose of the study is to assess the academic outcomes of international service opportunities and if/how the same experience is used to contextualize the learning process of earning a four-year degree. While there is a great deal of literature on all three topics, there is a gap in the literature with regard to qualitative research on international service-learning. Chapter three discusses the methodology that will be used in this study. Additionally, it will provide a rationale for qualitative research, specifically the phenomenological approach along with the role of the researcher, study design, data collection and data analysis.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of chapter three is to discuss the methodology used for this phenomenological study. This chapter begins with the research design used for this study. The chapter will then discuss what a phenomenological study is, rationale for using the phenomenological approach, followed by the central question for this study, sub-questions, participants, the role of the researcher, data collection procedures, confidentiality, data analysis, and conclude with accuracy and verification.

Research Design

Two different, yet linked, research paradigms exist in behavioral research; quantitative and qualitative. Researchers choose the paradigm in which they'll inquire based on underlying assumptions (Creswell, 2007). The nature of research depends largely on the phenomenon being studied. Quantitative research focuses on why something happens, while qualitative focuses on how or what is happening. Quantitative research uses random sampling of ample size as a means to generalize the results to the population at large. Conversely, qualitative utilizes purposeful sampling, which is transferable rather than generalizable. At present there is a gap in the literature with regard to qualitative research on the acquisition of intercultural competencies gained through international service-learning and their impact on the educational process.

Researchers bring philosophical assumptions to their research, whether they are aware of it or not (Creswell, 2007). "A close tie does exist between the philosophy that one brings to the research act and how one proceeds to use a framework to shroud his or her inquiry" (Creswell, 2013, p. 15). In qualitative research, the research serves as the data collection tool, analyzes data inductively, and recontextualizes data in order to uncover emerging themes. Qualitative research is often referred to as interpretive research. This is due to the fact that the researcher will often

“focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants” (Creswell, 2013, p. 25). More specifically, this study utilized the phenomenological approach. “In its applied form, phenomenology can be described as a qualitative research technique that seeks to make explicit the implicit structure and meaning of human experience” (Sanders, 1982, p. 353). With regard to educational research, a phenomenology seeks to “grasp the pedagogical essence of a certain experience” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 78).

Phenomenology

The phenomenological perspective began with Edward Husserl. Van Manen attributes his understanding of the lived experience from Husserl’s “life-world.” Barnacle (2004) stated,

For Husserl, there are two elements to the life-world. Firstly, the experiential world of perception, or intuition—that which grounds our activities and interests. Secondly, the life-world refers to the world as a whole—or that which encompasses the multiplicity of particular worlds. The world is not understood as an object, or discrete entity, but rather is the pre-given, always already there, horizon in which all of our experiences and actions are directed (p. 58).

The Phenomenological approach seeks to uncover the lived experience in ways that other qualitative approaches are unable. According to Van Manen, “Anything that presents itself to consciousness is potentially of interest to phenomenology, whether the object is real or imagined, empirically measurable or subjectively felt” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9). The lived experience is how one perceives their own presence in the world at the time of specific events and truths (Morse & Richards, 2002). Phenomenological research assumes that human experiences only

occur in the context of relationships with other outside forces such as people and things.

Creswell used Moustakas (1994) to describe the procedural process for a phenomenological approach.

First, the researcher determines whether or not the problem is best examined using the phenomenological approach. If so, the researcher will then identify the broad philosophical assumptions of phenomenology as it relates to the problem. Data is then collected from those who have experienced the phenomena. Participants are asked two broad questions (Moustakas, 1995); “What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomena?” (Creswell, 2013, p. 81). Data is then analyzed in search of significant statements and meaning. The results are then written in narrative form that “presents the ‘essence’ of the phenomenon called the essential, invariant structure” (Creswell, 2013, p. 82).

Rationale

Van Manen (1990) suggests that researchers should turn to an “abiding concern” that is of personal interest. While the literature provides insight on the acquisition of intercultural competencies and international service-learning, there is a gap in the literature with regard to the combination of those two experiences and how they inform subsequent educational experiences. This study has employed a phenomenological design in order to provide a linguistic explanation of the experience of acquired intercultural competencies in international service-learning and the impact on subsequent educational experiences. Phenomenological research is meant to “produce clear and accurate descriptions of a particular aspect of human experience” (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 44). According to Creswell (2009), “phenomenological research is a strategy of inquiry in

which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants”

Central Question

The intent of a central question is to specify the intent of the problem to be studied. According to Creswell (2013), “Qualitative research questions are open-ended, evolving, and non-directional” (p. 138). For the purposes of this study, the central question was; How does an international service-learning experience, facilitated by a four-year educational institution, ultimately inform the educational process for student participants?

Sub-questions

1. What were the means by which students were made aware of the expected acquisition of intercultural competencies while serving abroad?
2. What, if any, kinds of reflective exercises have students participated in after their international service-learning experience?
3. How have students used newly acquired intercultural competencies to inform the educational experience following an international service-learning experience?
4. What, if any, underlying themes emerged from international service-learning experiences and how they’ve informed the educational process following that experience?

Participants

Participants for this study have been purposefully selected from the University of Montana and Montana State University. As this study seeks to uncover broad themes related to international service-learning experiences and illustrate the essence of the shared experience

under inquiry, and how they impact the educational process, eligibility to participate was defined by broad parameters. Participants were selected based on specific criteria, such as being 18 years old or older. Using Creswell's criteria for participants (5-25). This study included 12 participants, ten from the University of Montana and two from Montana State University. The researcher had originally hoped for six and six. But, Montana State University had fewer opportunities for international service-learning and, therefore, fewer participants for this study. All participants have had different service-learning experiences, although they may have had those experiences in the same country. The inclusion criteria for participants was as follows:

1. Participants must be students at one of the two flagship institutions in Montana; the University of Montana or Montana State University.
2. Participants must have participated in an international service-learning experience that was facilitated by their educational institution.
3. Participants must be seeking a four-year degree.
4. Participants must have spent at least 15 - 19 hours of service learning outside of the United States.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher acknowledged his bias regarding this study. Having spent a substantial amount of time overseas and in multi-cultural settings, there was a potential for a natural bias toward the outcome of this study. Additionally, the researcher has spent extensive amounts of time both researching service-learning and experiencing service-learning. The researcher was mindful of biases and minimized the effect while collecting and analyzing data. Open-ended questions were used allowing participants to describe their experiences in their own words without interference by the researcher. The researcher utilized epoche, or bracketing, as a means

of setting aside personal “experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination” (Creswell, 2013, p. 80). This was meant to perceive the emerging themes of the research from a fresh and new perspective.

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected by interviewing participants in person over the course of two weeks, and was recorded. The intent was to interview participants in a relatively short time span in order to provide a higher level of consistency among participant experiences. The personal identifiers of participants have been kept separate from data. Written permission to record interviews was received prior to conducting interviews. All interviews were recorded and transcribed in order to achieve the highest level of accuracy in reporting. Transcriptions were done by the researcher in Word, using pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants. Interview questions were structured in such a manner that they would guide the conversation. Interview questions were established based on the sub-questions as follows:

1. What were the means by which students were made aware of the expected acquisition of intercultural competencies while serving abroad? (This question was meant to establish the level of understanding participants have of intercultural competencies and the extent to which their home institution was involved.)
 - a. Can you provide a working definition of the term “intercultural competence,” and if so what is it?
 - b. How did your institution prepare you for the acquisition of intercultural competencies prior to your international service-learning experience?
 - c. How did you prepare yourself for serving in a multi-cultural setting?

- d. What intercultural competencies did you expect to gain prior to your international service-learning experience?
 - e. Please describe the interactions and service you were engaged in and how they led to the acquisition of intercultural competencies.
 - f. Intercultural competencies can be categorized by knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Have you acquired any of the following six intercultural competencies, and if so please explain the process by which they were acquired?
 - i. Cultural self-awareness
 - ii. Culture specific knowledge
 - iii. View of the world from the perspective of other cultures
 - iv. Patience and perseverance when interacting in multi-cultural settings
 - v. Openness to other cultures
 - vi. Curiosity of other cultures
2. What, if any, kinds of reflective exercises have students participated in after their international service-learning experience? (This question is meant to establish the extent to which participants' home institution intervene with international service-learning experience reflection.)
- a. How long was your service-learning experience?
 - b. Was your service-learning experience immersive?

- c. What reflection exercises (i.e. journals, group conversations, follow up academic exercise) were offered to you by your institution following your international service-learning experience?
 - d. What self-guided reflection exercises did you partake in following your international service-learning experience?
- 3. How have students used newly acquired intercultural competencies to inform the educational experience following an international service-learning experience?
(This question was meant to determine whether or not participants utilized intercultural competencies in subsequent coursework.)
 - a. How have you utilized the intercultural competencies acquired during your international service-learning experience to better perform in the educational setting?
 - b. What impacts, if any, do the newly acquired intercultural competencies have on your educational experience post-service?
 - c. How has your international service-learning experience helped you contextualize your learning process?
- 4. What, if any, underlying themes emerged from international service-learning experiences and how have they informed the educational process following that experience? (This question was mean to establish common themes identified by participants.)
 - a. What have been the major themes associated with your international service-learning experience based on the multi-cultural nature of your experience?

- b. How have those themes informed your educational experience following your international service-learning experience?

Confidentiality Statement

All participants' identity has been kept confidential, with only the researcher and dissertation chair having access to the locked files that connect names or institutions with the data. Signed consent forms were locked and kept separately from the data. The audiotape of interviews has been transcribed by the researcher or a professional hired transcriptionist. The tapes will be erased after a successful dissertation defense. The transcriptionist has signed a statement guaranteeing confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Interview results were stored using a database in order to easily file and retrieve themes that emerged during data analysis. Analysis followed Creswell's (2013) six step process for phenomenological analysis. The first step was to bracket the researcher's personal experiences so that "focus can be directed to the participants in the study" (Creswell, 2013, p. 193). Next, significant statements were identified and categorized by meaning units. The researcher then gave textural and structural descriptions that, combined, make up the essence of the experience.

Trustworthiness

All researchers must be concerned with trustworthiness and validation, and ethical implications to their research. Researchers must attempt "to produce valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner" (Merriam, 2002, p. 22). First, researchers must provide enough data to sufficiently support their findings (Merriam, 2002). In order to provide a

sufficient level of trustworthiness, research must be valid and reliable. Validation can take two forms, ethical and substantive (Creswell, 2013).

Ethical validation requires the researcher to question their own underlying philosophical assumptions while simultaneously giving participants the opportunity to freely articulate their experiences. In other words, “our research should also provide non-dogmatic answers to questions we pose” (Creswell, 2013, p. 248). Substantive validation involves a detailed understanding by the researcher of the topic at hand. The research then works with the data to “co-create the interpretations derived” (Creswell, 2013, p. 248). This study exercised both ethical and substantive validation in order to provide a high level of trustworthiness for the user.

“In qualitative research, reliability often refers to the stability of responses to multiple coders of data sets” (Creswell, 2013, p. 253). For the purposes of this study, reliability was achieved by ensuring that themes were coded accurately and consistently. Accurate and consistent coding will ensure that emerging themes and the subsequent understanding of a shared experience are constant and stable.

Summary

Chapter three discussed the methodological approach used for this study. Beginning with the history and philosophical underpinnings of a phenomenology, this chapter described why a phenomenological approach is most applicable for this study. Next, the central question and sub-questions were outlined, which ultimately led to survey questions meant to get at the heart of the shared experience under examination. Lastly, this chapter discussed how this study has achieved trustworthiness.

Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter details the process for data analysis used to describe the phenomenon of international service-learning experiences and their impact on subsequent coursework. In order to effectively analyze data, Moustakas' (1995) six step approach was utilized. First, the researcher provides an overview of personal experiences as they relate to this study. Second, significant statements were identified throughout the data relating to the shared experience, and grouped in meaning units. Third, textural and structural descriptions will be provided in order to describe the essence of the phenomenon being studied.

"Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2013, p 76). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to assess the academic outcomes of international service opportunities and if/how the same international service-learning experience is used to contextualize the learning process of earning a four-year degree. There is a gap in the literature regarding the impacts of international service-learning on student learning outcomes. That gap in literature was the basis for this study's central question of this phenomenological study: How does an international service-learning experience facilitated by a four-year educational institution ultimately inform the educational process for student participants?

Personal Experiences

Phenomenologists choose an abiding concern to study (Manen, 1990). As a result, the researcher assumes the risk of personal experiences impacting the study. Creswell (2013) suggests "In some forms of phenomenology, the researcher brackets himself or herself out of the study by discussing personal experiences with the phenomenon" (p. 77). This is referred to as epoche (Moustakas, 1994) or bracketing (Creswell, 2013). Epoche is rarely perfected. But, the

mere act of bracketing one's own experience allows the consumer of researcher a better understanding of how the researcher's personal experiences have influenced areas of research, interaction with others with a shared experience, and general attitude toward the experience.

The researcher began by journaling as a means for reflection. The researcher has extensive experience abroad, having traveled to or lived in the following countries: Canada, Mexico, the Bahamas, Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Belgium, France, and Poland. Additionally, the researcher has experienced service-learning as a researcher, participant, and facilitator. None of the international experiences were for educational purposes. However, self-guided reflection exercises have revealed the acquisition of intercultural competencies that are part of this study. As a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the researcher was constantly subjected to multi-cultural settings. As a result, ethnorelativism was achieved naturally. Having acquired the intercultural competencies related to this study, the researcher introduces a natural bias to assume that all participants will have had similar experiences. Having bracketed the researcher's personal international experiences, the researcher acknowledges the risk and has safeguarded against any leading statements that might encourage faulty answers by participants.

The researcher also brings a natural bias toward service-learning as a form of experiential learning. Having facilitated, advocated for, written, and researched service-learning experiences, the researcher brings to this study a bias toward service-learning as a valuable component to the educational process. As the literature review has discussed, there are opponents to service-learning. While opposition is limited, the researcher was mindful during data collection not to let personal biases influence participant answers.

Participant Selection

Participants for this phenomenological study were purposefully selected from the University of Montana and Montana State University. Eligibility requirements were broad. This study included ten students of the University of Montana and two from Montana State University. Participants for this study have all participated in an international service-learning experience that was facilitated by their educational institution, were seeking a four-year degree, and spent at least 15-19 hours in a service-learning experience outside of the United States. Types of service-learning experiences varied by participant. Most were focused on impoverished communities. Legal services, food insecurity, issues of social injustice, and healthcare were the four primary categories in which participant service-learning experiences were situated.

The researcher began the search for participants by contacting representatives who were responsible for facilitating international service-learning, study abroad opportunities, and civic engagement opportunities. A detailed description of the proposed study and inclusion criteria was provided, along with a request to be put in touch with eligible participants. Originally, the researcher hoped for six participants from each institution. It became apparent early on that not all four-year institutions have the same level of available opportunities for international service-learning experiences. Upon identifying the initial participants for this study, they were asked to identify peers who fit the inclusion criteria. Ultimately, twelve eligible participants were identified for this study. All interviews were conducted in person in a private setting. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Table 1 provides participant demographic information, including sex, institution in which the participants were enrolled, the location of their service-learning experience, and the duration of their experience.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Locale</i>	<i>Duration of Experience</i>
<i>P1</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>UM</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>5 months</i>
<i>P2</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>UM</i>	<i>Costa Rica</i>	<i>7 months</i>
<i>P3</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>UM</i>	<i>Kenya</i>	<i>6 weeks</i>
<i>P4</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>UM</i>	<i>Mexico</i>	<i>3.5 months</i>
<i>P5</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>UM</i>	<i>Tanzania</i>	<i>4 weeks</i>
<i>P6</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>UM</i>	<i>Kenya</i>	<i>6 weeks</i>
<i>P7</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>UM</i>	<i>Argentina</i>	<i>3 months</i>
<i>P8</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>UM</i>	<i>Malaysia</i>	<i>5 months</i>
<i>P9</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>UM</i>	<i>Thailand</i>	<i>6 months</i>
<i>P10</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>MSU</i>	<i>Albania</i>	<i>5 weeks</i>
<i>P11</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>MSU</i>	<i>Nicaragua</i>	<i>6 weeks</i>
<i>P12</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>UM</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>6 months</i>

Note. P = Participant, M = Male, F = Female, UM = University of Montana, MSU = Montana State University, Local = Country of experience.

Data Analysis

This study was largely centered around the acquisition of intercultural competencies. Consequently, the first question was: Can you provide a working definition of the term “intercultural competence,” and if so what is it? All participants were given the working definition used for this study after given the opportunity to

answer the initial question regarding the definition of intercultural competence. Table 2 gives participant responses verbatim. Participant responses to this first question range, with little consistency. By providing the study's working definition, the researcher was able to continue on with interviews knowing that participant responses will be based on a consistent definition of the term intercultural competence.

Table 2

Defining Intercultural Competence

Participant	Participant Responses
Study	<i>Effective and appropriate behavior in communication in intercultural situations.</i>
P1	<i>So, what I see is intercultural competence would be at least having a degree of experience in intercultural relations and being able to respond appropriately to intercultural situations.</i>
P2	<i>I would say that awareness of bias. If I could just leave it at those three words, that would work for me. So basically it's before you go about answering a question within a meeting or whether let's say even over Skype with someone from a different country, you are aware that you are coming from one framework and that they might be coming from another and so before you even go about that, you sort of have it premeditated that of, you know, that might come from a different view point and that view point might not be correct and then might be the right one to have.</i>
P3	<i>I think broadly, it would be the ability to kind of function or I don't know if that just means communicator also. Just like kind of being generally aware</i>

that when you're in another culture and you have another coming to you if that's being able to ask or communicate sensitively or... with an awareness where that person is coming from or I don't know, if it makes sense.

P4 *Um...I would say the understanding of, or the attempts to understand the culture in which you're working in a way that allows you to be successful with working with them.*

P5 *No definition.*

P6 *So, I would think of that as just being able to understand and kind of be a part of the culture or like if you're in a situation, you've kind of understand why people are doing the things that they're doing because from what I've seen, all cultures act so differently and so, that's my definition of that.*

P7 *I guess not just the ability to like know all the facts of other culture but know to be, to be able to understand the people and their motivations and the way they communicate and the way they think and interact with one another.*

P8 *Just being aware of the differences between your culture and another culture that you might be in and just knowing whether there is a difference and their similarities but I don't, I never actually heard that term before.*

P9 *I think it's probably not a very rational definition but it's just the ability to kind of navigate the situation in which the cultural context is very different from the one that you normally operate under...*

P10 *I would say that it is something that includes a lot of different cultures. I mean, that's kind of dark, you know, but just like a project, a work, or something that you need to include a lot of different cultures and ideas from*

different people to be something amazing.

P11 *No definition.*

P12 *No definition.*

Participant interviews lasted between sixty and ninety minutes, all of which were conducted face-to-face. Data gathered during the interview process were then used to analyze the shared experience and determining the essence of that experience. Methods for data analysis derived from Creswell (2013). Once all interviews were complete and transcribed, the researcher read each interview completely and repeatedly at least five times to gain a comprehensive understanding of each participant's experience and better understating of the shared experience as a phenomenon. In doing so, significant statements were identified. This process is known as horizationalization (Moustakas, 1994). The following is a verbatim example of how one participant described their educational process post-experience:

P4: I think that's a little – fortunately, it's a little easier for me to apply in my social work classes and they're a lot of the really small classes with discussions or social work ethics class, I feel that's a good example of where I've been able to apply those cultural competencies and understanding the subtle differences in culture from even two different locations in Nicaragua or Mexico that I was able to observe that I think that we make assumptions about people's cultural backgrounds here especially in Montana that can be easier to make those assumptions and so, when in my ethics class for me, I have all these conversations about some pretty touchy subjects and people get really fired up and it's like how

can that person have that perspective or whatever and so, I think it has been good for just the curiosity part of where that person's coming from and how they came to the conclusions that they have especially when you're in the middle of a dialogue with somebody rather than another classroom setting where it's a lecture class, I can't have those thing thoughts but then, just write a paper and move on, whatever, but when you're interacting with the same group of people, each class and conversations I always think that the, yeah, just willingness to be open and understanding that I think we try to take when we go abroad which is awesome but I think people forget to take it back to being here and that we assume we know people's culture.

Over the course of conducting interviews and re-reading interview transcriptions, a greater understanding of the shared experience began to emerge. Individual descriptions eventually became part and parcel to the overall essence of the experience, allowing the researcher a better understanding of the phenomenon under inquiry. Once significant statements had been identified, they were organized by meaning units.

Significant Statements and Meaning Units

A multitude of significant statements were identified throughout the transcripts. Each significant statement was then grouped “into larger units of information, called ‘meaning units’ or themes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 193). The following are examples of significant statements for three sub-questions:

Table 3

Significant Statements

Participant	Participant Responses
Sub-question	<i>Have you acquired any of the following six intercultural competencies, and if so please explain the process by which they were acquired?</i> <i>Curiosity of other cultures.</i>
P1	<i>Yeah. 100%. 110%. Like now, I'm just fascinated by global interaction</i> <i>Wanting to know about the countries that I didn't know how to pronounce before going.</i>
P3	<i>Yeah. I think I'm definitely. I'm definitely curious especially as you would like, explore how different cultures and start comparing how different cultures, maybe, say food for instance or things like that.</i>
P4	<i>I think that's something that grows more and more each time you experience a new culture, at least it has for me, and I think, yeah, I feel that. Something that's increasingly more and more and I think I'm more interested now to the subtle differences. I feel more inclined to like Central and South America and after I graduate, looking at jobs in Central America, and I feel super curious about a couple that are in between the places that I've been to, and I think because of that curiosity of what differences versus similarities will there be in the culture.</i>
P9	<i>Definitely. I did a lot of traveling like throughout Southeast Asia and every time I went somewhere I found out something cool. I just want to know more. It made me so much more curious.</i>
Sub-question	<i>What self-guided reflection exercises did you partake in following your international service-learning experience?</i>

- P5 *I guess mostly just reading my journal, really, and I guess, writing papers was just more of me to get to get a final thought out of what I grot through, what I got from my experience.*
- P6 *For y Kenya trip, we did get together, those of us who were from Missoula and we did reminisce about, like, Kenya, and what that was like and how we were doing... back in the US. I like to just experience things and I really do want to get into that, I don't know, I guess like usually, it came from talking to other people and kind fo sharing my experience.*
- P7 *We get together again and talk about it and reminisce but, and then, we always invite that teacher because she's really cool and we talk to her. I wrote a few times usually when there was just something really big that happens that I felt like I need to capture.*
- P8 *I think the internal dialogue.*
- Sub-question *What have been the major themes associated with your international service-learning experience based on the multi-cultural nature of your experience?*
- P1 *The first theme of, like, courage and being able to travel alone. Another themes that I recognize was... you have a tendency to search for familiarity in customs or small hobbies or what have you.*
- P3 *It definitely is just probably humility in general. You have t o find very*

creative ways, you know, to do that or I think the other is just, like, the idea of poverty.

P5 *I got really interested in social inequalities and their impacts.*

P11 *I guess, things that I saw down there that redefined what poverty meant for me. We have a version of it here, but it's definitely different.*

Meaning units were used as categorization tools to establish themes and better understand the essence of the phenomenon. This process resulted in the identification of five themes.

1. Lack of Standard Institutional Preparation for the Acquisition of Intercultural Competencies
2. Nearly Unanimous Acquisition of Identified Intercultural Competencies Associated with this Study
 - a. Cultural self-awareness
 - b. Culture specific knowledge
 - c. View of the world from the perspective of other cultures
 - d. Patience and perseverance when interacting in multi-cultural settings
 - e. Openness to other cultures
 - f. Curiosity of other cultures
3. Journaling and Peer-to-Peer Interactions Were Heavily Utilized for Self-Guided Reflection
4. Participants Utilized Intercultural Competencies and International Experiences to Inform Subsequent Education
5. A Deeper Understanding of Gender Roles in Different Cultures

Identified themes and supporting participant responses can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

Themes and Supporting Participant Responses

Themes	Sub-theme	Participant Responses
Lack of Standard	N/A	<i>P2. I would... I don't know, not feel like</i>
Institutional Preparation for the Acquisition of Intercultural Competencies		<i>I could be as prepared to go abroad so...</i> <i>P3. I would say not very much. They didn't have to like... I didn't go through any course or anything like that.</i> <i>P4. I don't think that I felt particularly prepared through the programs that I was in.</i> <i>P5. What we did is, we had different professors come in during our weekly meetings and we were taught about the history of Africa and then other professors, like an anthropology professor, that cam in and he talked to us about the culture there.</i> <i>P7. I had a teacher on the program, so I had a teacher and she talked about it from a personal experience and then she</i>

talked about the history and other aspects of it.

P8. We took a class. It's a semester long class and they prepared us by telling us what we needed to research.

P9. The university didn't.

P12. I took a bunch of three or four French classes before I went.

Nearly Unanimous

Acquisition of Identified

Intercultural

Competencies Associated

with this Study

Cultural self-
awareness

P1. Absolutely.

P2. Yeah.

P3. I think so. You know, in other cultures, sometimes they're not really lying to you but they would be going around something that looks dishonest to us, but it's not.

P4. Yeah. I think that was a big learning curve...Not even registering certain

things that I had made assumptions.

P5. Yeah, I guess. Seems like you're trying to like, year, adapt myself as best I could... or adjusting to their cultural norms.

P6. Yeah. I definitely experienced that.

P7. Yeah, it was big. There was a lot of differences that I noticed.

P8. Yeah, I definitely experienced that and even more so coming back.

P9. Yeah, I definitely acquired that one abroad.

P10. I have learned so many things and I have started to look at things from a different perspective with a different point of view because of this knowledge that I've gained.

P11. Yeah, I guess learning that throughout the time there, it was definitely a learning experience.

P12. Yeah, absolutely I think that was definitely, definitely acquired throughout multiple interactions with

Culture specific
knowledge

other students that, you know, the dialogue was more on my level.

P1. I would say, throughout the small conversations that I had with those international friends, I've learned so much about their cultures that I never learned at home, at least not so easily.

P2. It's like, specific and I think I've learned the most about the Malay culture but, you know, they would go on Fridays for prayers and they take me along.

P3. I think it's like the base, you know, skill that of course I can always use.

P4. Yeah, especially with my service learning experiences being in more rural towns and then spending some time in the big city versus the rural town. I feel like those experiences helped me to really distinguish.

P5. Yeah, talking to the people that we are surrounded with kind of means more of, like, the insight to their culture.

P6. Yeah, I'd say I learned a lot.

P7. Yeah, it was mostly details and kind of like a social setting with strangers, of how you interact with strangers there versus other Hispanic countries.

P8. Yeah, you know I think yes because when we made local friends that really guided our experience and, and not, I think what that experience mostly was, was being guided.

P9. I leaned a lot about the religion.

P11. I thought I leaned a pretty good amount about Nicaraguan culture, but yeah, still just a baby.

P12. Yeah, I absolutely. I think there's only so much a book, you know, can teach you.

View of the
world from the
perspective of
other cultures

P3. I was surprised to see how much people idolize the West and how much they want to become like us.

P4. Yeah. That looks super interesting especially in light of

political conversation.

P5. Yes. I definitely think so.

*P6. It's kind of interesting
actually. I mean, this is kind of
going on Americans but most
Kenyans, they know all about
American politics*

*P7. Yeah. I would say that in
Latin America, there's kind of a
dislike of influence of the United
States.*

*P10. I guess an example of that
is the whole group constantly
heard the term tranquilo, like
relax. The life we live here and
the speed we live is just so much
faster.*

P12. Absolutely, absolutely.

Patience and
perseverance
when interacting
in multi-cultural
settings

P1. Yes.

*P2. Sure. I mean, being in a meeting
where things are translated in three or
four different languages, it takes a lot of
patience.*

P3. Yeah, I think so. Just because someone can't communicate well with you, doesn't mean that they're not thinking or they're unintelligent.

P4. Yeah. There just seemed to be these slow moving process with everything and I know people talk about that all the time with different cultures.

P5. Yeah, I definitely think so.

P6. I think so. Because when we are going into a new culture, you're going to offend people and you have to be patient with yourself and try to maintain that.

P7. I just had to let go of some of those things and, like, persevere by letting go of knowing I'm going to make mistakes.

P8. I think I was more patient than I thought I'd be just because of learning and it's a slow process.

P9. I don't describe myself as an inherently patient person, but I think that my patience definitely increased

because of that experience.

P10. Yeah. It need patience, language barriers, like, you really have to have patience.

P11. Oh definitely. Yeah.

P12. Yeah, definitely. When learning a new language, I think that's one of the really key things to have and to cherish as the patience is something you need.

Openness to
other cultures

P1. Yes. I think I was pretty open before going, but there were situations such as being in a small gathering when Korean girls were teaching us Korean games, they had to do, like, clapping hand or what have you and that was something I perhaps wouldn't have been open enough back home to learn about.

P3. Yeah. I think I'm definitely more willing to at least try to understand where they're coming from.

P4. I've been fortunate to have a lot of different experiences that have opened me up in that way.

P5. I think so, definitely.

P6. Oh yeah. I just have this desire to go and explore new cultures now and to learn a lot more about anywhere, really.

P8. Yeah. I came back and realized that I have grown into, like, seeing that culture and that religion in such a different way and coming back to people that really are either like, or worse than me.

P10. Yeah, I'm open to other cultures.

P11. It's impossible to explain how much more open I am now.

P12. I was just around so many different people and so many different students that it was really easy to kind just see where they came from and see how they would speak to one another.

Curiosity of
other cultures

P1. Now, I'm just fascinated by global interaction.

P2. Yeah, I'm very curious.

P3. I'm definitely curious especially as you would explore how different

cultures are.

P4. Yeah. I think that's something that grows more and more each time you experience a new culture.

P5. I would definitely want to go back and learn more and also, just like, go to other places.

P6. Yes. I have several countries that I really want to go to next.

P7. Yeah. I want to see other cultures. We have a tendency here to lump all of Latin American together and since they're actually so distinct from one another, I want to visit all of them.

P8. Yes. It made me want to move so that I can see what else is out there because there is such a different world.

P9. Yeah, definitely. Every time I went somewhere I found out something cool. I just want to know more.

P11. Oh yeah, yeah.

P12. Yes, absolutely. I think I put a lot of stress on, you know, the more you

Journaling and Peer-to-
Peer Interactions Were
Heavily Utilized For Self-
Guided Reflection

N/A

know, the more you want to know.

P4. Just a lot of journaling and then having conversations with people around me and friends and about those experiences.

P5. Just writing it all out and then re-reading the journal I've talked to other students about their experiences.

P6. For me, you know, thinking about it and sharing with other people.

P8. Conversations with friends.

P9. A lot of journaling... after I left. And talking to friends who studied abroad at the same time.

P12. I write in a journal.

Participants Utilized
Intercultural
Competencies and
International Experiences
to Inform Subsequent
Education

N/A

P1. I feel like I became a fuller version of myself. So the way I interact with professors, in a way to me, feels more informal and so that respect element and authority being recognized but for some reason, like, my time abroad just made me more

comfortable.

P1. I have a bigger better idea of what I'm accomplishing at the university. I know what classes I want to really take seriously. It's almost like applied learning

P2. It's definitely framed, you know, my area of focus now, how I see aid, how I see development has totally changed and so when I take classes on these topics... things have really impacted my course work and just conversations that I have in class.

P2. That kind of brought to life theory into application for me.

P3. Coming back really kind of... I noticed a rejuvenating interest in the setting and language.

P4. It's easier for me to apply in my social work classes and there

are a lot of really small classes with discussions or social work ethics class, I feel that's a good example of where I've been able to apply those cultural competencies and understanding the subtle differences in culture.

P4. I feel more willingness as well to have conversations with my professors because of my trip, I had to work pretty closely with a single professor.

P5. My appreciation for the education that I'm given.

P5. I think it more solidified my decision to go into medicine.

P6. I mean, I want to perform better because its, you know, coming back and you know, we are really blessed with what we have.

P6. I've seen in that culture... people struggling with that and

*so, I've actually really enjoyed
that with my classes because it
kind of brings that to life and it's
less about trying to learn
something and more about, like,
wow, I can draw back on my
experiences.*

*P8. I think being there has
completely changed my body of
work.*

*P12. I guess the impact that it
has on me now with regards to
my education is that I just need
to be really open minded about
my learning style and how I
acquired the information.*

A Deeper Understanding of Gender Roles in Different Cultures N/A

P3. They would tell me, "You're so lucky," the women would say that, and they are talking about how it was kind of counter cultural for the husbands to try to work more with their wives. You know, with their gender roles so strict that, like, they weren't supposed to help each other. It was kind of a source of shame if you had to help your wife with her chores or she help you with your role or responsibilities.

P4. Gender norms is a big one. It seemed to be particularly evident, the differences.

P8. And I just felt like there were some women there that wanted to be expressive. There were a lot of women that were expressive that didn't feel like they could be but didn't feel like they could be. So, doing things like that made me feel like I was empowering myself as a woman.

P8. It's interesting because there, I was

like, in the USA this is how it feels to be a woman. And then I remember thinking about that repeatedly and coming back and realizing I didn't have as much of that as I thought I did when I was in Malaysia.

P10. There is a whole new set of gender norms. It is very different from here and I just, like, being from the LGBTQ community, it's completely frowned upon and socially you cannot...

Textural Descriptions

Creswell (2013) suggests that phenomenologists “write a description of ‘what’ the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon” (p. 193). This process is called the textural description and should include “verbatim examples” (Creswell, 2013, p. 193). The central question guiding this study was: How does an international service-learning experience facilitated by a four-year educational institution ultimately inform the educational process for student participants? Consequently, all twelve participants in this study took part in an international service-learning experience facilitated by their home institution. Each participant’s service-learning experience was unique with regard to their specific service-learning project. Additionally, all participants’ experiences took place in different locations. However, all participants had a shared experience in an institution facilitated international service-learning project.

Participants for this study experienced service-learning in a cultural environment different than their native culture. Many were subjected to social inequities, putting on display stark differences between their native culture in America and the culture in which their service-learning experience took place. The emerging themes a) lack of standard institutional preparation for the acquisition of intercultural competencies b) nearly unanimous acquisition of identified intercultural competencies associated with this study c) journaling and peer-to-peer interactions were heavily utilized for self-guided reflection d) participants utilized intercultural competencies and international experiences to inform subsequent education and e) a deeper understanding of gender roles in different cultures.

Lack of standard institutional preparation

Nearly all participants described a lack of intentional institutional preparation regarding intercultural competencies. Most participants were able to provide their own working definition of the term *intercultural competency*, but none had been introduced to the term by their home educational institution. While participants took measures to prepare themselves, and at times, cited pre-experience coursework as a means for preparation, none were subjected to specific academic exercises meant to prepare them for the acquisition of intercultural competencies. P2 described pre-experience preparation by saying *“I decided to just add a minor and so the anthropology minor works really well with getting all of my general requirements finished and so, I think coming from that sort of framework and as well as, like, studying economics... I think pairing those two together really helps. Perhaps if I hadn’t had that as a minor I would not have felt like I was as prepared.”* This sentiment was echoed throughout interviews, as participants described an organic preparation that, at the time, they were not aware was preparing them for

the trip. But upon reflection, it was apparent that lessons learned throughout their coursework proved to be greatly beneficial to their international service-learning experience.

P8 echoed P2's description. *"The university itself didn't exactly. But I was affiliated with the University of Montana and that actually involved working with a lot of international students who come to Missoula and that situation definitely helped."* Similarly, P7 stated *"I had a teacher on the program, so I had a teacher and she talked about it from a personal experience and then she talked about the history and other aspects of it."* While participants did not see a well defined institutional model for preparing them to serve abroad, they all cited some sort of institutional experience that aided them in preparing for their experience.

The fact that participants did not receive any institutional preparation did not result in a total lack of preparation for the experience. Rather, participants were adequately prepared for international service-learning after having taking personal steps to prepare themselves. This component of the process was organic, meaning there was no standardized means of preparation.

Nearly Unanimous Acquisition of Identified Intercultural Competencies Associated with this Study

Despite not having been formally prepared for the acquisition of intercultural competencies, participants nearly unanimously shared the experience of acquiring the six intercultural competencies associated with this study including a) cultural self-awareness b) culture specific knowledge c) view of the world from the perspective of other cultures d) patience and perseverance when interacting in multi-cultural settings e) openness to other cultures and f) curiosity of other cultures.

Beginning with cultural self-awareness, participants unanimously responded as having increased cultural self-awareness following their shared experience. P1 described an event that

highlights her increased cultural self-awareness by saying *“Another moment that would stick out in my mind was when I was at this pharmacy with my Mexican friend and I was doing the talking because she’s a little more shy and, I mean, maybe that’s probably American identity that we’re like, ‘go guys’ as far as asking questions. Like, ‘yah, I’m the American, I can handle this.’”* P1 described improved cultural self-awareness by explaining situations where she saw herself as taking on stereotypical characteristics of the American culture while interacting in multi-cultural situations. Conversely, P7 described her experience in terms of differences. *“There was a lot of differences that I noticed and I’m pretty good at adapting to that kind of thing. So, I did my best to adapt because I don’t want to just standout.”* P7’s awareness of her native culture came in the form of attempting to blend in to the multi-cultural environment, saying *“mostly the easiest way to do that was just, like, dressing the same as other people there.”*

Cultural specific knowledge was described by many participants as the result of interacting closely with locals. P8 described her experience by saying *“When we made local friends, that really guided our experience and, I think what that experience mostly was, was being guided through Islam. And so, I earned a lot because they are super open to answering our questions, which I think is hard for a lot of Muslims or Americans because they don’t want to be judge for how they think and what they believe in.”* This sentiment echoed throughout interviews with participants reporting very welcoming environments with hosts and peers willing to share local cultural knowledge. P2 described a similar experience. *“I spent some out of the office time with a group of young lawyers, so they are people that would be about 25 or 26, just out of law school and before they actually got to pass their bar exam. They would go on Fridays for prayers and they took me along and, you know, we would go in a different restaurant, and you eat with*

your hands and so they kind of taught me that experience and then there was, yeah, so I guess I would ask and also I got to go with some of them to their homes.”

With only a few exceptions, participants gained culture specific knowledge as a result of close interpersonal interactions with locals.

Participants gained an understanding of the world from the perspective of other cultures through interactions with locals. One third of the participants noted regular dialogue relating to the American political atmosphere. With all of the participant experiences taking place during the 2016 political campaign, participants noted frequent questioning regarding the Trump campaign. P2 said *“Well, I mean, the election in the US was going through the primary at the time... and that was even before Trump was the prime candidate, so there are a number of republicans and a lot of people are asking me ‘oh, yeah, you know Donald Trump? Is he really seriously going to be the president?’”* Conversations such as this allowed participants a better understanding of how other cultures perceive American politics and outside cultures at large.

P7 had a similar experience as P2 saying, *“So I realized when I was there that America is not the only place where people kind of lump other cultures together because they would have sort of a tendency to lump England and America together because we’re all kind of white English speakers and they didn’t really like either for various reasons. In a general setting, if they et an American then that’s fine, but generally they were really fans of England.”* He went on later to say, *“They would tell, like Obama wanted to visit Argentina while I was there and they were like “Obama, go home because we don’t like America.””*

Patience and perseverance were largely reported to have been acquired due to language barriers, and at time simply due to cultural differences. As the literature review pointed out, language barriers are oftentimes the first barrier met in multi-cultural settings. As a result, when

experiencing such an interaction, participants had no choice but to exercise patience in order to allow enough time for communication to be achieved. P3 described her experience as challenging due to language barriers. But, she describes a high level of patience when interacting with others. *“I don’t know, like, just because someone can’t communicate well with you doesn’t mean that they’re not thinking or they’re unintelligent. I think sometimes, that, I don’t know, maybe when I first speak it’s just like you have to realize that. You have to realize that they still think even though they can’t communicate with you as well.”*

Unlike P3, who described her patience improving as a result of others, P6 reflected the responsibility on herself by saying, *“when we are going into a new culture, you can’t expect to, I mean, you’re going to offend people and you have to be patient with yourself.”* She went on later to add *“I just noticed being here in the US, I’m a little bit more patient with other people too and giving people time because you want to, this whole, the key to cultures, I feel like is just understanding that like, I think something that you learn when you go elsewhere because you learn how to understand people and how to ask questions and to really engage with people and that takes a ton of patience.”*

Participants reported increased openness to other cultures after having been exposed to multi-cultural settings. The acquisition of this intercultural competency dovetailed with the acquisition of the final competency related to this study, curiosity of other cultures. P3 began by describing what she saw as common misconceptions of other cultures. *“There are so many theories behind other cultures and why they’re doing what they’re doing. Like as a woman for example, the theory is that they’re oppressed, you know? Cause that certainly goes out the window and just hearing their story, where they’re coming from.”* In this case, P3 was able to

identify a common misconception, and identify how one might overcome that misconception by being open to differences among other cultures.

P5 described her increased openness of other cultures as resulting from regular interactions with other cultures. *“Just being able to accept other people or what they’re doing and learning, yeah, that I’m not from the best way of doing anything. There’s no best way. That was really a big thing that opened my eyes. It’s like realizing, yeah, other people do things differently and that’s fine and that’s good and, just being on of a few white people or American in the city, just realizing that I was one of the minorities.”* Increased openness to other cultures tended to result in increased curiosity of other cultures.

P4 describes her experience by saying *“I think that’s something that grows more and more each time you experience a new culture, at least it has for me. I feel like it’s something that’s increasingly more and more and I think I’m more interested now to the subtle differences.”* P7 noted *“We have a tendency here to lump all of Latin America together and since they’re actually so distinct from one another, I want to visit all of them.”*

The acquisition of intercultural competencies was nearly universal among participants. The shared experience under inquiry for this study did not include intentional institutional preparation for the acquisition of intercultural competencies, but did ultimately result in organic experiences that led to their acquisition. It is important to note that the acquisition of intercultural competencies was nearly unanimous due to the fact that a single participant experienced international service-learning in a western country and was not exposed to many of the needed components that result in the acquisition of intercultural competencies.

Participants of this study enjoyed the acquisition of intercultural competencies and the results that accompany such acquisition. As described in the literature review, intercultural

competencies are gained over time and along a continuum. The international service-learning experience facilitated such a continuum of intercultural competency acquisition, meaning that all participants with this shared experience have enjoyed the benefits associated with intercultural competence as outlined in the literature review.

Journaling and Peer-to-Peer Interactions Were Heavily Utilized for Self-Guided Reflection

Reflection exercises facilitated by the institution were haphazard. However, self-guided reflection was heavily utilized by participants as a means for making sense of their experience. In particular, journaling and peer-to-peer conversations were commonly used tools for reflections. P9 reported *“I did a lot of journaling while I was there and, I guess, after I left. I went to and edited all my photos and I wrote a little bit more. It’s just in my journal, reflecting on the experiences.”* Additionally, she stated *“I had two really close friends who studied abroad at the same time... so it was really fun to get together with them and kind of, there are a lot of common things, but then our experiences were also so vastly different.”*

Similarly, P4 stated *“I am a big journaler, especially when I am travelling I feel like there’s more downtime and I try to focus in on whatever experience I’m having at that time and so, I think I’m a pretty reflective person in general and so, yeah. Just a lot of journaling and then having conversations with people around me and friends and about those experiences and whatever.”*

Participants of this study shared a common affinity for journaling, which aided them in better understanding their shared experience. Through the process of journaling, participants were able to reflect on their experience and make sense of how those experiences impacted their lives. The result is a better understanding of other cultures, native culture, and cultural norms.

Participants Utilized Intercultural Competencies and International Experiences to Inform Subsequent Education

As with reflection exercises, participants did not receive any formal education regarding the applied use of intercultural competencies during coursework subsequent to their international service-learning experience. Very few participants realized that they had been utilizing components of their newly acquired intercultural competencies during subsequent coursework. But, once it was brought to their attention, all participants were able to identify specific instances in which they had benefited from intercultural competencies. P1 stated “*I have a bigger better idea of what I’m accomplishing at the university. I know what classes I want to really take seriously. It’s almost like applied learning.*” But that statement was prefaced by her saying “*That’s kind of something I’ve never thought to identify before. I personally recognize that first when I returned that my critical thinking skills were definitely on point.*” In other words, she was able to identify changes in herself, but had not considered how those changes had impacted her educational process.

In response to using intercultural competencies in subsequent coursework, P2 stated “*It’s definitely framed, you know, my area of focus now, how I see aide, how I see development has totally changed and so when I take classes on these topics, it’s not just like it’s not just pour money into things. Those things have really impacted my coursework and just, conversations that I have in class.*” With regard to ethics classes, P4 reported “*It’s fueled me more or angered me more just learning about different ethical issues that arise in the US and writing about those.*”

Participants did not typically utilize intercultural competencies for specific assignments such as papers or projects. Rather, they used them to better contextualize the overall message of their learning process and in interactions with their peers and professors.

International service-learning impacted how participants interacted with professors, peers, and content in coursework following their international service-learning experience. The result for participants is a better sense of their academic experience and a contextualization of content that allows for a better understanding.

Deeper understanding of gender roles in different cultures. Lastly, despite a total lack of inclusion in interview questions, participants identified a better understanding of gender roles voluntarily. Nearly all participants experienced some exposure to the just a position of gender roles in the US and western world with those of the country in which their service-learning experience took place. Participants spoke of gender norms in a matter of fact manner, rather than in a judgmental manner. Simply put, participants were subjected to gender norms that clearly differed from their native culture. P8 described her experience from the standpoint of being a woman. *“It’s interesting because there, I was like, in the USA this is how it feels to be a woman. And then I remember thinking about that repeatedly and coming back and realizing I didn’t have as much of that as I thought I did when I was in Malaysia.”* P3 described her experience by saying *“They would tell me, ‘You’re so lucky,’ the women would say that, and they are talking about how it was kind of counter cultural for the husbands to try to work more with their wives. You know, with their gender roles so strict that, like, they weren’t supposed to help each other. It was kind of a source of shame if you had to help your wife with her chores or she help you with your role or responsibilities.”*

P10 described his experience like this, *“there is a whole new set of gender norms. It is very different from here and I just, like, being from the LGBTQ community, it’s completely frowned upon and socially you cannot...”* All participants for this study were Americans, and

therefore shared a native culture. The emerging theme related to gender norms was seen as a positive development and contributed to participant's cultural self-awareness as well.

A deeper understanding of gender norms was largely the result of service-learning experiences in developing countries. By witnessing gender norms of developing countries, participants were able to utilize self-reflection exercises and make comparisons to their native culture. As a result, this experience allowed participants a deeper appreciation and understanding for gender norms of their native culture.

Structural Descriptions

Creswell (2013) suggests that phenomenologists follow the textural description with a structural description, which explains how the phenomenon took place. The phenomenon under inquiry for this study took place in twelve countries: Germany, Costa Rica, Kenya, Mexico, Tanzania, Argentina, Malaysia, Thailand, Albania, Nicaragua, and France. All participants were engaged in international service-learning facilitated by their home educational institution. Participant majors varied, but all participants were engaged in service-learning relative to their individual majors. All experienced were considered immersive by participants and the researcher.

Composite Descriptions

Lastly, Creswell suggests that phenomenologists “write a composite description of the phenomenon incorporating both the textural and structural descriptions” (Creswell, 2013, p. 194). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to assess the academic outcomes of international service opportunities and if/how the same international service-learning experience is used to contextualize the learning process of earning a four-year degree. Participants in this study shared a common experience with regard to the structure of the

experience as described in the structural description, as well as sharing the themes outlined in the textural description. By virtue of having participated in an international service-learning experience facilitated by their home institution, participants acquired six intercultural competencies (cultural self-awareness, culture specific knowledge, view of the world from the perspective of other cultures, patience and perseverance when interacting in multi-cultural settings, openness to other cultures, and curiosity of other cultures). Participants were not prepared by their home institution for the acquisition of intercultural competencies, but nonetheless were able to acquire the six intercultural competencies associated with this study. Post-experience reflection exercises were largely self-guided, as participant home institutions did not facilitate intentional reflection exercises. Journaling and peer-to-peer conversations were the primary tools used for self-guided reflection exercises. Additionally, participants utilized their acquired intercultural competencies to inform subsequent coursework. Although they were largely unaware of the fact that they were doing so prior to interviews. Lastly, participants gained a greater understanding of gender role differences after having the shared experience associated with this phenomenological study.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed data analysis procedures and findings for this phenomenological study. In doing so, the shared experience of participating in an institution facilitated international service-learning experience. Twelve participants were interviewed. Using Creswell (2013) as a guide for data analysis procedures, the researcher began by bracketing personal experiences. Bracketing was followed by identifying significant statements, that were then categorized by meaning unit, and ultimately used to identify emerging themes. Lastly, the researcher gave a textural and structural description, which was used to create a

composite description. The next chapter includes conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further inquiry.

Chapter Five: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

This qualitative phenomenological inquiry studied international service-learning experiences among four-year undergraduate students and its impact on subsequent coursework. Interviews were then transcribed for analysis. Using Creswell (2013) as a guide, interviews were read repeatedly and in-depth. During these readings, statements of significance were identified and categorized by meaning units. Once meaning units were established, emerging themes were identified. Those emerging themes were then used to describe the essence of the shared experience. The essence of the shared experience under inquiry was described using textural and structural descriptions followed by a composite description. An understanding of this shared experience will aid educational leaders, researchers, and professors in decision making when preparing students for service-learning experiences abroad as a means for providing a more robust educational experience as a whole. This chapter will provide the findings of this study. Those findings were used to interpret implications for practitioners. Lastly, this chapter will provide logical recommendations for educational leaders and practitioners for both decision-making and future research.

Findings

A review of the literature was used to establish the central question for this phenomenological inquiry: How does an international service-learning experience facilitated by a four-year educational institution ultimately inform the educational process for student participants? Building on this central question, the aforementioned sub-questions were developed. The following are findings that resulted from interview questions related to the four sub-questions and the central question.

Central Question

Ultimately, an international service-learning experience facilitated by a four-year educational institution has an impact on the educational process. Participants of this study experienced the acquisition of intercultural competencies and reported having utilized those competencies during subsequent coursework. Many of the intercultural competencies gained were used in interpersonal communications and used to contextualize content being delivered in class. Additionally, international service-learning experiences aided participants in professional ambitions.

Sub-questions and related findings.

Sub-question 1: What were the means by which students were made aware of the expected acquisition of intercultural competencies while serving abroad? As described in the literature review, the acquisition of intercultural competencies typically occurs as a process. There is, however, a gap in the literature with regard to how that process unfolds when participants are made aware of the process prior to it taking place. Participants to this study were not made aware of the acquisition of intercultural competencies while abroad. This is due to the fact that programs through which participants experienced service-learning abroad did not provide intentional preparation that specifically addressed intercultural competencies. However, participants were prepared for the acquisition of intercultural competencies through unintended pre-service experiences. Figure 2 below depicts the three primary means by which students were prepared for international service-learning that aided in the acquisition of intercultural competencies.

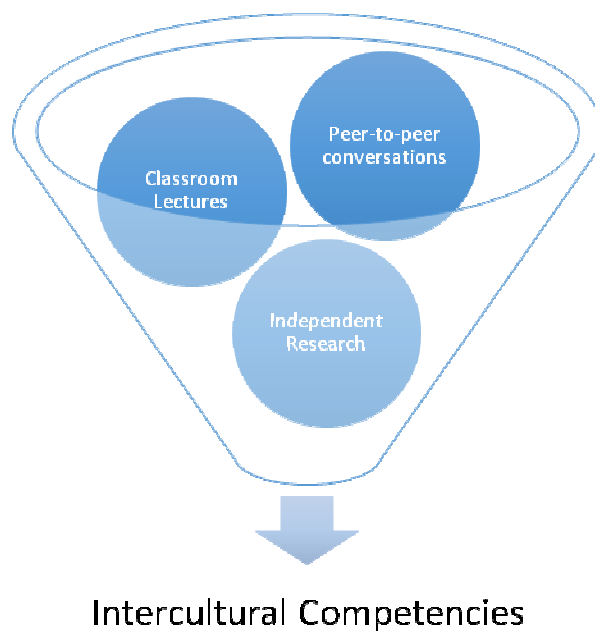


Figure 2. Pre-service experiences aiding in the acquisition of intercultural competencies

Participants reported multiple activities that prepared them for their international service-learning experience. While their home institutions did not specifically discuss intercultural competencies, they did provide them with background information on their service nation and a deeper understanding of culture specific issues regarding their respective countries.

Participants acknowledged the importance of such activities, going on to acknowledge the desire to have been explained what intercultural competencies were, how they're acquired, and the ultimate benefit to having acquired them. Ultimately, the preparation they received was adequate, but lacked a level of detail that gave participants a full understanding of its value.

Sub-question 2: What, if any, kinds of reflective exercises have students participated in after their international service-learning experience? Participants reported a lack of intentional institutional reflection exercises. In large part, participants

returned to their home institution with little institutional acknowledgement that they had experienced international service learning. Despite the lack of institutional follow-up, participants engaged in multiple reflection exercises that aided in a more robust understanding of their shared experience. The two primary means by which participants reflected were peer-to-peer conversations and journaling. Other exercises were used tangentially, such as greater depth of thought on subject matter in classes and heightened engagement in global issues such as politics and the economy. Figure 2 depicts levels of use of reflection exercises, with journaling being the primary exercise and conversations with faculty being the least utilized.

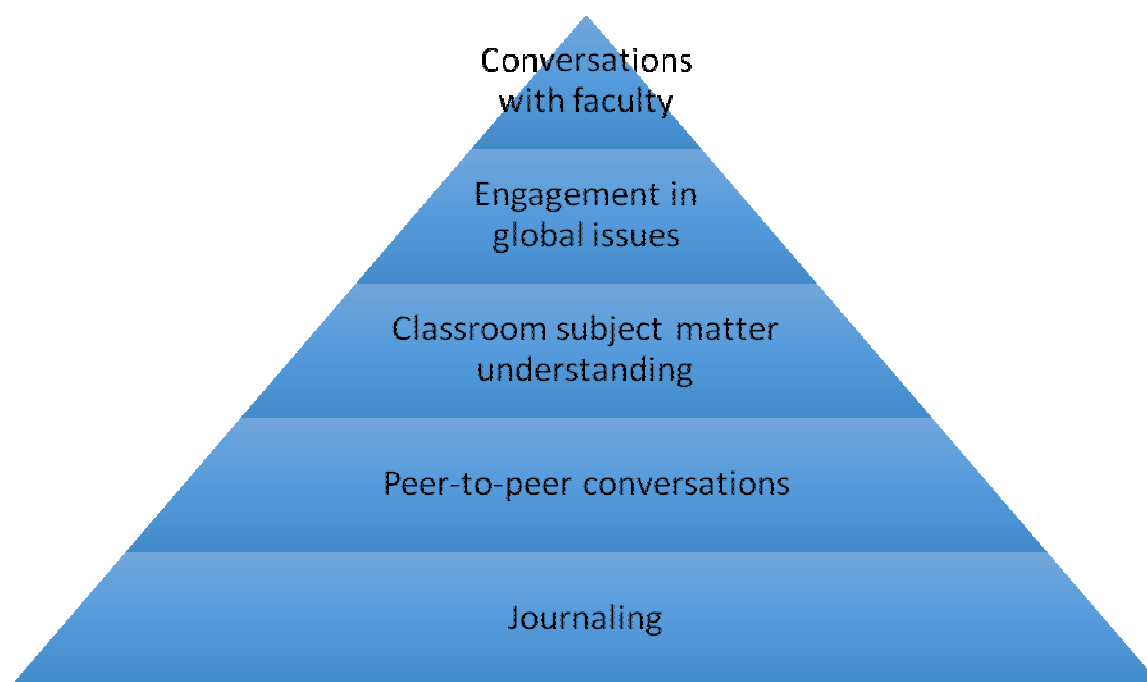


Figure 3. Hierarchical depiction of reflection exercises

Participants reported having been journalers prior to the shared experience under inquiry. This may have led to the high level of journal use for reflection post-experience. However, peer-to-peer conversations seem to have taken place organically as a result of excitement following a life-changing experience. Participants reported wanting to “tell everyone” about their experience after returning to their home institution. As a result, many had the opportunity to naturally reflect on their experience through conversations with peers who had similar experiences as well as describing their experience and its impact to others. Both journaling and peer-to-peer conversations were initiated by participants. Other reflection activities included using classroom subject matter as a means to better understand their experience, a greater depth of engagement on issues of global importance using their personal international experience to add context, and follow-up conversations with faculty.

Sub-question 3: How have students used newly acquired intercultural competencies to inform the educational experience following an international service-learning experience?

There is a gap in the literature review discussing the assessment of student outcomes prior to international service-learning experiences. This sub-question was meant to, at least partially, fill that gap. Participants reported using newly acquired intercultural competencies to inform the educational experience following their international service-learning experience. Participants reported not having considered using newly acquired intercultural competencies in the educational setting. But, once they were asked the questions, participants were able to recall specific instances of having done so. The primary means of use was through interactions with professors and peers that led to a deeper understanding of content. Participants noted having heightened levels of curiosity and willingness to engage with others on issues of global and local importance. For some, intercultural competencies were used to determine if their professional

ambitions were appropriate after having a profound experience abroad such as exposure to extreme poverty and gender inequalities.

The primary benefit for participants with regard to newly acquired intercultural competencies is the ability to add context to conversations, geopolitical issues, and relationships. The shared experience under inquiry allowed participants a greater sense of direction and understanding that was readily applied to coursework subsequent to the international service-learning experience.

Sub-question 4: What, if any, underlying themes emerged from international service-learning experiences and how have they informed the educational process following that experience? This sub-question was meant to explore any unexpected outcomes associated with the acquisition of intercultural competencies. The shared experience under inquiry resulted in five themes; lack of standard institutional preparation for the acquisition of intercultural competencies, nearly unanimous acquisition of identified intercultural competencies, journaling and peer-to-peer interactions were heavily utilized for self-guided reflection, participants utilized intercultural competencies and international experiences to inform subsequent education, and a deeper understanding of gender roles in different cultures. These underlying themes were indicative of the shared experience. All five themes will be discussed below under implications.

Conclusion

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the shared experience of international service-learning facilitated by four-year institutions. Students who shared this experience acquired intercultural competencies associated with this study and used them in subsequent coursework. Furthermore, reflection exercises were largely self-guided with peer-to-peer conversations and journaling being the primary tools for reflection. It is important to note that all

of the participants of this study were fluent in the language of their host country. Language proficiency played a major role in participants' ability to better understand the culture and social norms of their host culture. This shared experience, although facilitated by participant home institutions, included very few institutional interventions to aid students in understanding the impacts of such an experience. In doing so, home institutions left students to their own devices with regard to applying the outcomes of an international service-learning experience to their educational process. The findings of this study support the accompanied literature review. The literature review included multiple means of measuring the acquisition of intercultural competencies. Regardless of whether one sees this process as a continuum, spectrum, or latticed process, participants of this study all exhibited a process of acquisition that left them more culturally competent than they had been prior to their experience. Furthermore, the added component of service-learning led to a greater understanding of critical issues, as described in the literature review. The implications of participants lacking institutional intervention are outlined below, along with recommendations for addressing such shortcomings.

Implications for Educational Leaders and Faculty

The value of service-learning, which can be traced back in the literature to Dewey's (1938) experiential learning, is its ability to allow students better understanding of their academic interests. Additionally, it has the potential to provide valuable insight on professional ambitions for students during the educational process. Participants of this study benefited greatly from their experience abroad. The acquisition of intercultural competencies associated with this study has better positioned participants to be successful students and understand issues of global importance. While they did actively participate in self-guided reflection exercises, there was no intentional institutional intervention to guide participants through the reflection process, helping to ensure

that, as students, the greatest value possible was achieved by the international service-learning experience. Additionally, on the front end, there is a great deal of room for improvement in preparing students for the acquisition of intercultural competencies and for a more targeted preparation in general. While participants in this study have generally benefited by the experience, much of the benefits have been either organic or achieved by personal means.

Intentional institutional intervention will require a high level of collaboration across discipline. All twelve participants are pursuing unique majors, meaning there are twelve separate disciplines represented in this study. In order to provide adequate intervention, institutions of higher education must be willing to provide pre and post-experience education cross-curricula.

Institutions provided international service-learning experiences must be able to connect these experiences with the educational process. All participants reported being left to their own devices following their experience. The result was a universal lack of understanding with regard to how the experience should shape the educational process. Rather, participants were able to identify educational benefits to the experience only after having been asked about it.

Lastly, the greater depth of understanding of gender roles was an emerging theme that was incongruent with other themes. However, it was part and parcel to participant exposure to social inequities faced by the inhabitants of their host nation. Consequently, participants held issues of social importance at a much higher level of importance following their experience. As noted in the literature review, many students who participate in international opportunities are students with financial means. If this holds true for participants of this study, exposure to social inequities may have been more profound due to a relative lack of exposure to such high levels of poverty. Regardless, participants were greatly impacted by the differences in gender norms and high levels of poverty. The result was a heightened scrutiny of their chosen professional path.

For educational leaders this could mean a path toward greater efficacy in higher education with regard to post-education employment. Most participants in this study were preparing to graduate. Meaning, they began to question their professional goals late enough in the educational process that there was little opportunity to change course if needed.

The implications for educational leaders hinges on their ability to provide a meaningful education that aligns with the expectations of the student to the extent possible. With regard to international experiences, the focus for participants shifted from a formal educational experience prior to the experience, to one that simply happened while in college after the experience. This indicates diminished meaning to the international service-learning experience and an injustice to students both in educational outcomes and financial investment. In other words, once the international service-learning experience had finished, there was no institutional follow-up to discuss the event. This raises a number of concerns. First, how does the home institution assess the experience to ensure it met the initial expectations? Second, if there is no follow-up, are students expected to utilize the outcomes of the experience? Lastly, is there an expectation that such experiences make the educational process more robust, or are they simply an opportunity for students to obtain an international experience?

The implications for educational leaders and faculty will depend on the institution and what impact they hope to have on students with international service-learning experience. But, due to the high cost and time spent outside of the traditional educational setting, it would be most prudent to maximize the potential for such experiences by including pre and post-experience educational activities that include guided reflection exercises, discussions that include the outcomes of international service-learning such as the acquisition of intercultural competencies,

and dovetailing the international experience with the educational experience to help students inform their professional decision-making process.

Recommendations

The following section includes recommendations for applied use and further research for educational leaders and faculty. The purpose of the recommendations are for educational leaders and faculty to better utilize international service-learning experiences in the applied setting as well as offer suggestions for further research on the phenomenon under inquiry in order to further guide best practices in the field of international educational leadership. Recommendations derive from in-depth literature review and the results of this study, including emerging themes and significant statements.

Recommendations for applied use. The impact of international service-learning on the educational process is immense. As this study has shown, students acquire intercultural competencies and utilize them in the educational setting. Furthermore, exposure to social inequities such as culture specific gender norms offers students the opportunity to scrutinize their own professional goals to ensure that their educational ambitions are in alignment. According to this study, much of the aforementioned impacts are either organic or occur as a result of the student rather than the institution. In order for these impacts to become more profound, educational leaders and faculty must incorporate a better understanding of intercultural competencies, guided reflections exercises, and career coaching using, in part, the outcomes of the international service-learning experience. This can happen by facilitating pre and post-experience coursework that is cross-curricula, and intentional. Figure 4 offers a visual representation of how this might take place.



Figure 4. Model for Intentional Institutional Intervention

The visual representation above depicts the educational process surrounding an international service learning experience, showing the pre-experience student as one with little understanding of the impact of such an experience. By the time they've reached the post-experience education, the experience will be fully understood and used to inform decision making regarding the educational process as a whole, and professional ambitions.

In the pre-experience class setting, professors should outline the expected outcomes of an international service-learning experience. In doing so, students will have a better understanding of why and how the upcoming experience will impact their educational process. During the experience, students should participate in consistent guided reflection exercises in order to make sense of their current experience. This process will allow students to put in to context the lessons learned in the pre-experience classroom setting as well as develop a better understanding of their current experience. Finally, following the international service-learning experience, students should be shepherded through a guided reflection process to ensure they are able to fully contextualize their experience and apply it to their educational process. By participating in the aforementioned three steps, students will fully realize the value of international service-learning.

Recommendation for further research. A hallmark of higher education in the Rocky Mountain West is the difficulty of travel to and from as well as a self-imposed isolationism. Therefore, the results of this study are transferable to a very specific demographic. Further research should include other institutions of higher education, denoting specific international opportunities available to the student body. Additionally, future research should build upon this study by incorporating other identified intercultural competencies and self-guided reflection activities.

One consequence of international service-learning is the impact on the professional ambitions of participants. It is recommended that future research examines the shift, if any, students undergo with regard to professional ambitions after having experienced international service-learning. This study has shown that participants re-evaluated their professional ambitions based on exposure to multi-cultural environments and social inequities. Building on this recommendation, it is suggested that researchers examine the point in which international service-learning takes place in the educational process and how that impacts professional ambitions. As pointed out above, participants in this study were preparing to graduate. This means that few would have the opportunity to act on shifting professional ambitions without significant financial and time detriment. For those participating in international service learning experiences earlier in their educational career, a shifting professional ambition may not come at such a high price.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to assess the academic outcomes of international service-learning opportunities and if/how the same international service-learning experience is used to contextualize the learning process of earning a four-year

degree. All participants experienced international service-learning facilitated by their home institution. Participant experiences were largely dictated by major and took place in mostly developing countries. Participants reported a lack of institutional definition of intercultural competencies and lack of institutionally guided reflection exercises. Despite the lack of institutional intervention, participants reported a nearly unanimous acquisition of intercultural competencies associated with this study and having participated in self-guided reflection exercises. Additionally, participants reported a deeper understanding of cultural specific gender roles based on interactions in societies with social inequities. The results of this study have implications for educational leaders and faculty wishing to provide international service-learning opportunities that are relevant to student educational processes and outcomes.

This study was undertaken in an attempt to fill a gap in the literature and aide international educational leaders in providing effective educational experiences through international service-learning. Post-secondary education institutions continue to be impacted by global forces, requiring educational leaders to further internationalize their institutions on an ongoing basis. The results of this study can be taken into consideration based on existing institutional practices and student outcomes. Institutions of higher education must consider how they are preparing students for international service-learning experiences. This study would suggest that further intervention will make international service-learning experiences more impactful for students, and therefore more effective in contributing to the post-secondary education process.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Study Title

A phenomenological inquiry of international service-learning experiences and their impacts on post-service educational experiences.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Roch Turner, graduate student

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FACULTY SUPERVISOR

Dr. John Matt

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Special Instructions to Participants

This study may contain words that are new to you. If you read or hear any words that you are not familiar with, please ask the researcher who will be interviewing you to explain them to you.

Purpose

You are being asked to participate in a research study examining international service-learning experiences and their impact on the educational process post-experience.

You have been chosen for this study as you have insight into educational issues with regard to international service-learning experiences.

Procedures

Thank you for agreeing to an interview via phone with me. This interview will take about one hour and will be audiotaped. I will also be taking notes as you answer questions.

You will be asked a variety of questions about your international service-learning experience including questions regarding intercultural competencies how they have or have not impacted your educational process.

A detailed analysis will be done with the data provided by your interview.

After the interview, you may choose to provide the researcher with documents regarding your international service-learning experience and educational experience.

You will need to sign the consent form (attached) in order to participate in this study. You will sign one form that you may keep and one form that I will keep.

Risks/Discomforts

Although no risks or discomforts are anticipated, answering the research questions may cause you to think of feelings that may make you sad or upset. If this happens, you may stop the interview and take a break. The interview can proceed when you feel comfortable. If you wish to terminate the interview completely, you may do so with no negative consequences. You will be asked if the researcher can use the information that you provided up to this point or if you wish to withdraw completely from the study and not allow the researcher to use your

information. If this happens, the researcher will ask if you can provide the names of other individuals who may be able to complete the interview.

Benefits

Your contribution to the study may assist the field international education, particularly post- secondary education. You will also receive a copy of the study once it is completed.

Confidentiality

Your identity will be used in my findings unless you specifically request otherwise. Your data and information will be released only with your written consent. If you agree, I will use quotations from the interview in my research findings. You will have the opportunity to review any quotations and qualitative data before my final draft.

If you wish that your interview and identity remain confidential, only the researcher and dissertation chair will have access to the locked files that connect your name or institution with the data. Your signed consent form will be locked and kept separately from the data. The audiotape of the interview will be transcribed by the researcher or a professional hired transcriptionist. The tape will be erased after the study has been approved. The transcriptionist will sign a statement guaranteeing confidentiality.

Compensation for Injury

Although only minimal risks are foreseen in taking part of this study, the following liability statement is required on all University of Montana forms to inform and protect you.

In the event that you are injured as a result of this research, you should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of The University or any of its employees, you may be entitled to reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by the Department of Admission under the authority of M.C.A. Title 2, Chapter 9. In the event of a claim for such injury further information may be obtained from The University's

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal

Your decision to take part in this research is entirely voluntary.

You may refuse to take part or you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are normally entitled.

If you choose to withdraw, you may do so at any time.

You may also choose not to answer any questions during the interview.

Questions

If you have any questions about the research now or in the future, you may contact Roch Turner at 406-360-8478 or Dr. John Matt, my dissertation chair, at 406-243-5610.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the IRB through The University of Montana Research Office at 406-243-6670.

Participant's Statement of Consent

I have read the above description of the research study. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been satisfactorily answered. Furthermore, I

have been assured that any future questions that I have will also be answered by the research team. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study. I understand that I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Printed Name of Participant: _____

Participant's

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Release form permission to use quotations

The purpose of this form is to secure permission to use quotations from the interview conducted as part of a research study on international service-learning experiences and its impact on the educational process conducted by Roch Turner. The undersigned (participant of the study and originator or the quotation) hereby grants permission for Roch Turner to utilize quotations by the undersigned to be reported in his research study.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Interview Protocol

Interview Form: A phenomenological inquiry of international service-learning experiences and their impacts on post-service educational experiences.

Date: _____ Time: _____ Male: _____ Female: _____

Institution: _____ Ethnicity: _____

Major: _____ Year: _____

Opening Statements:

Thank you for agreeing to take time from your busy schedule to participate in this research study. There are a few things that I would like to make sure you understand before we get started.

- I will be asking you some general questions and writing notes as we proceed. You will also be audiotaped during the interview.
- If you provide permission, I will be using your name, major and institution in my dissertation.
- No direct quotes from you will be used in the study without your prior permission. When quoted, your identity, location, and institution will remain confidential unless you give me permission to use them.
- If you hear any terms during the interview that you would like to have defined, please let me know.
- There are no correct answers to the questions that I will be asking you. What is important are your thoughts, feelings and experiences. The intent is to hear your thoughts, feelings and experiences, not to make judgments on your responses.
- You may withdraw or terminate the interview at anytime. You may also choose not to answer any particular question.

Interview Questions

1. What were the means by which students were made aware of the expected acquisition of intercultural competencies while serving abroad?
 - a. Can you provide a working definition of the term “intercultural competence,” and if so what is it?

- b. How did your institution prepare you for the acquisition of intercultural competencies prior to your international service-learning experience?
 - c. How did you prepare yourself for serving in a multi-cultural setting?
 - d. What intercultural competencies did you expect to gain prior to your international service-learning experience?
 - e. Please describe the interactions and service you were engaged in and how they led to the acquisition of intercultural competencies.
 - f. Intercultural competencies can be categorized by knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Have you acquired any of the following six intercultural competencies, and if so please explain the process by which they were acquired?
 - i. Cultural self-awareness
 - ii. Culture specific knowledge
 - iii. View of the world from the perspective of other cultures
 - iv. Patience and perseverance when interacting in multi-cultural settings
 - v. Openness to other cultures
 - vi. Curiosity of other cultures
2. What, if any, kinds of reflective exercises have students participated in after their international service-learning experience?
- a. How long was your service-learning experience?
 - b. Was your service-learning experience immersive?

- c. What reflection exercises (i.e. journals, group conversations, follow up academic exercise) were offered to you by your institution following your international service-learning experience?
 - d. What self-guided reflection exercises did you partake in following your international service-learning experience?
- 3. How have students used newly acquired intercultural competencies to inform the educational experience following an international service-learning experience?
 - a. How have you utilized the intercultural competencies acquired during your international service-learning experience to better perform in the educational setting?
 - b. What impacts, if any, do the newly acquired intercultural competencies have on your educational experience post-service?
 - c. How has your international service-learning experience helped you contextualize your learning process?
- 4. What, if any, underlying themes emerged from international service-learning experiences and how have they informed the educational process following that experience?
 - a. What have been the major themes associated with your international service-learning experience based on the multi-cultural nature of your experience?
 - b. How have those themes informed your educational experience following your international service-learning experience?